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Writer's Preface

At our first meeting, I didn't think Caroline Slade was at all extraordinary. Short, solid and seventy-ish, she seemed only normal for her generation. Anyone would be glad to have her for a grandmother. Then, in her heavily-accented voice, she began to recount her history.

Weeks passed as she relived her life and I struggled to digest it. I sought not only the facts of her past, but the person who had lived those facts. The three-plus decades, religious differences, and cultural disparities between us slipped away. Their importance diminished as I strove to understand her.

Often during the tapings, I caught myself mentally asking myself how she could, after all her experiences, be so sane, so realistic, so normal. How could she ever enjoy life again or even be aware of life's pleasures after what had happened to her. How could she care about what's for lunch or if the dogwoods are blooming as profusely this year as they did last? How could she bear to sit with me hour after hour and tell me all that happened, making it come alive in horrifying details for me, as well as for herself? I got some inkling about the answer to my unvoiced questions one day when we were discussing strength and the ability to endure. "It makes me laugh when I hear some people talk. They say that they could never do this or never do that. They really don't know what they can do if

they have to." She said it with the expression of one who knows very well what she can do if she has to.

Gradually, I realized that Caroline Slade is not ordinary. She represents only a rare specimen among humanity. The scope of her memory and the clarity of her perspective are amazing, especially since they have been retained without diary or journal. Rarer still is the level of integration she has reached. Somehow she has reconciled all the experiences of her life, gathering them together, examining them for herself, putting them into her own perspective and making herself richer for them all. Her experiences, as diverse as they are, have been made a meaningful whole. They are like multicolored threads in a large tapestry, held together by the solidarity of her motives, the consistency of her ethics and the unswerving rationality of her decision making. These have provided her in her worst hours with the power of survival and they bring her now the gift of inner peace.

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Chapter I

The first time that I had the dream, I awakened from it drained and terrified. For days afterward, I was disturbed by it because I could draw no association between it and anything in my life that could have caused it. It was so real that it made me afraid for many days afterward. I remember it today just as vividly as the morning I awakened from it.

In the dream I am walking through the streets of Warsaw with many other people. Herded together, we pass familiar closed shops on a guided route. I am one of hundreds, maybe thousands moving in silence toward the Jewish cemetery at the

end of Gesia Street. As I approach the cemetery gates, I see those ahead of me passing mutely into the graveyard. As I draw close to the gate, something inside me tells me not to follow the others. I turn aside at the gate, watching dumbly as the others continue to enter without murmuring or looking back. Suddenly, I am afraid for them because I know that they are marching toward death. I cannot call to anyone or drag them away from the gates. I turn and walk home alone.

On the way back, the streets are empty but the shops are opened. I wander into an unattended shop, approach the shelves and reach for a bottle of perfume. Mid-motion, my hand drops down. I leave the shop and continue my walk home. When I arrive, no one is there. It occurs to me that I am utterly alone and becoming confused. Momentarily before the dream is gone, I regret that I didn't go with the others into the cemetery. My life prior to the dream had been uneventful, completely unconnected with any of the events portrayed in my nightmare. I grew up as part of a large, busy, upper middle-class Polish Jewish family. My father, Mordecai Pinczewski, owned a prosperous leather business in Warsaw, so our home in the Jewish section of the city was comfortable, secure and lively. I had four older brothers: Jacob, Maurice, Mandel and Wolf. Then came Celine, my older sister, me (Franya), and my younger sisters Gustava and Eva. My mother, Rachel, was a busy housewife and mother, occupied with running the large houses we owned and raising her children. Like most women of

her era, she didn't participate in the running of my father's business.

My parents were very devoted to each other and to us, but it was my father who dominated the household. His dominance though was one of warmth and firm love. His benevolence, both in and out of the Jewish community, was well-known. He was a person who accepted all people for what they were, not confining his friendships and goodness only to rich friends or only to Jewish people. Because of his business connections, he had many Gentile friends who were guests at home. One man, Alexander Weigle, who was to play such an important part in my life, was both a business and personal friend of my father's. He came to visit when I was young, looking very mature and elegant in his tailored business suits.

My father was a religious man, although not fanatically so. He loved Judaism, its practices and holidays, so our house was permeated by it, but never constricted by it. We always celebrated the major Jewish holidays at home with the usual cooking and baking, prayers and excitement. In his wisdom, though, my father permitted us to celebrate Polish Christian holidays as well. I realize now that he did that so that we would never feel separate or different from our friends. He wanted us also to learn about the ways of others and to be tolerant of them as he was. So, each year we had a Christmas tree and received gifts from Santa Claus.

But Judaism must have been more than just holidays and

celebrations to my father. He lived its tenets every day, incorporating them into every aspect of his life quietly and without pretense. By his example he taught us to be kind and generous to everyone, regardless of their religion or social class. He encouraged us to cultivate friends of every respectable kind, rich or poor. Just because we were wealthy, I never grew up thinking that I was better than anyone else. Just because we were Jewish, I never thought that I was different or less than anyone else.

When I was very young, my father's brother and sister-in-law died during an outbreak of cholera. Their deaths left four children as orphans. There was no question about what my father would do. My four cousins were brought to live with us. My parents raised them, loved them and educated them as they did the eight of us.

I remember well two incidents that portray my father's character most accurately. I can recall a family discussion, mostly between my parents, that an associate of my father's had spoken unjustly about him. The man's harsh words got back to my father and were discussed at home. A short time later, the same man came to our house to speak with my father. He said that his daughter was planning to marry, but he hadn't enough cash for the dowry and the wedding. Without discussion, my father went to the safe that he had in the house, took out a large amount of cash and handed it to the petitioner. A few days later, a wedding invitation arrived in the mail. My father

graciously accepted and attended, despite the theft of his best winter coat the day before. At the last minute my mother suggested that he not attend the ceremony, since he would have to wear something less than his best. But he refused to stay home and appear ungrateful or disdainful of the invitation.

Both my parents kept in close touch with each of us, making each of us feel secure and loved for himself. Everything that my mother did, all her work, centered around her family and its needs. Despite their active social life and many friends, the center of my parents' life was their family. I remember our regular Friday night ritual, with my father presiding. After dinner, he would gather us all together in our living room. Then, each in turn, he would ask us what had happened in our lives that week. My parents listened to each one's narrative, answering questions, giving guidance, consoling, laughing, caring. That Friday night ritual served many purposes. It kept my parents in constant touch with each of us. It allowed them to view us as individuals and to follow our development closely. It gave them time to teach us. For us children, it was important, too. It made us feel valuable, since each of us had the undivided attention of both our parents when his turn came. It also got us habituated to the fact that our parents wanted to know about us, were concerned with us and were there to help us.

My father's acceptance of all of us as individuals was

especially helpful to me, because from very early in life I realized that somehow I was different from the rest of the family. I was always more adventurous and headstrong than any of them, even the boys. I always had my own picture of things, made my own plans and went my own way. I had no ambition to follow the more conventional behavior of my mother and sisters. I thrived on the competition at school and always came home with the best grades. I excelled in languages and science, not common studies for girls to do well at in those days. I loved nature and was forever collecting specimens of something and bringing them home. My father never discouraged my activities, nor did he compare me to my more beautiful sisters. Once, when I lamented the fact that I wasn't as pretty as they, he laughed it off. Then he told me not to worry because he would give me a larger dowry than theirs.

My mother, on the other hand, wasn't always so affirmative about my pursuits. She was always telling me to slow down, stop running and rest more. I can't remember ever being seriously sick, so I assume that it was just expected that girls of my day be more demure and sedentary than I was. Maybe, too, my mother was dismayed at my failure to model myself after her. My driving ambition to become a doctor must have irritated her. She was strictly a housewife and a lady. She had no worldly ambitions of her own, other than having and caring for children. She was, of course, completely dependent on my father for her security and left all the major decisions to him.

If my father had any serious medical problems, I must have been too young to be told about them. At any rate, his death came suddenly and shockingly when I was twelve. My sister and I had gone on a school excursion to Sopot, a resort town on the Baltic. In his usual attentive way, my father had seen us off at the station. I thought nothing of it when, as the whistle blew and my sister began to board, he held us back, saying, "No, don't go yet. You still have five minutes more."

Eight days later we were summoned home for his funeral. Celine and I were bewildered at being met at the station by our eldest brother, Jacob, who told us about my father's fatal heart attack.

It was Jacob who assumed the leadership of the family and upon whom my mother transferred her dependence. Although he was married and living in Lowicz he uprooted himself and came to Warsaw to run the family business.

I missed my father sorely in the years following his death. I missed especially the unquestioning approval he always gave my plans for the future and my scholastic attainments. Actually it was he who insisted that all of us, both girls and boys, acquire good educations. Fortunately for me, neither my mother nor Jacob thought to change that precedent. So I gratuated from high school at sixteen, filled with aspirations for a medical career.

It was when it came time for me to apply for the medical program at the University of Warsaw that I encountered the hard

facts of anti-Semitism (Polish) for the first time. Like hundreds of others I submitted my application and waited for a reply. I was shocked and bitterly disappointed at the response. "Numerus clausus", "Quota filled", it said. But what it meant was that no Jews would be accepted.

I didn't realize it then but my experience was part of a long history of anti-Semitic sentiment in Poland. Prejudice against Jews was strongly rooted in Poland long before Hitler was heard of. That fact is strange, considering the reality that Poland held the largest Jewish population in Europe. That fact of life was totally abhorrent to me, since I considered myself no different than anyone else. The rejection letter from the University was my first encounter with the future for all Polish Jews.

But I had the confidence of youth. Undaunted, I turned my aspirations elsewhere. If it wasn't possible for me to be a medical doctor, I would become a veterinarian. I approached the chairman of that department at the University. This time, I met with discrimination of a different sort. The professor informed me loftily that he wouldn't consider my application, not because I was Jewish, but because I was female. As he saw things, women had no place in the field of veterinary medicine.

Although it seemed that I was running up against stone walls all around, I wouldn't relinquish my dream of a medical career. Sadly, I admitted to myself that my career goals would never be realized unless I left Poland. Because of my academic

past, I set my sights on France. My French was almost as good as my Polish, so I knew that I would be able to manage there. With my usual determination, I applied to the Sorbonne, which then had one of the finest medical programs in the world, and was accepted.

I was one step closer to having what I wanted and thrilled with the prospect of studying in Paris. Despite the protestations of my mother that it was too far from home, that I would be alone and unprotected in a strange place and that it would break her heart to let me go, I made my plans. I saved every cent I could, chose my clothes carefully and left Poland for the first time in August, 1926. My first destination was Brussels. Celine had married a Belgian fellow a few years before and was happily settled in Brussels. I was to spend some time with them before I left for Paris.

As it turned out, I spent all but about six months of the next two years in Belgium. During that time, I attended the Universite Libre de Brusselles, earning my certificate for the first half of my pre-medical studies as well as becoming certified in physical therapy at the Swedish medical therapy school there. During that time, too, I succeeded in obtaining and holding my first job, doing embroidery at one of the small salons in the city. My sister and her husband were very generous to me financially, but what I wanted most was to have money of my own and the feeling of independence that accompanies it.

The time in Belgium was filled with learning experiences

of all kinds. Along with the challenge of academic studies in French, my part-time job and the new-found power to make most of my own decisions, came the widening of my perspective that travel always brings. For the first time, I was immersed in a social life that was free from the old-fashioned restrictions that I had lived with at home. Because of the academic atmosphere young men and women at the Universite mixed freely. I also became aware of the fact that in contrast to Poland, there was almost no anti-Semitism in Belgium. The question of my being Jewish never came up there.

Although I was never homesick for Poland or for my family, I did miss the young man that I had seen so much of since I had been a child. Mark had been my tutor in Math when I was preparing for my high school exams. Since he was about 10 years older than I and attended the architectural school at the Warsaw Polytechnical Institute, I then considered him the most worldly person I knew. Until I had left Poland, we had been friends. He came to our house often, where we had our lessons together under the watchful eye of my mother. I thought about him frequently in Brussels, feeling that I was gaining a worldliness that would soon match his.

At the end of my second year in Brussels, I began to get disturbing letters from my mother. She wanted me to come home. She complained constantly about the fact that I was so far away from the family and that her contact with me was so limited. Today it is unthinkable for a mother to make such a demand of her

eighteen-year-old daughter, but then it was unthinkable not to acquiesce to a mother's requests. It was plain that she wanted me to continue my education back in Poland. So, in the fall of 1928, I returned to Warsaw.

It was soon after my return that I had the awful dream about the cemetery. Naturally, I told various members of the family about it, but they had no answer for its occurence, either. Although it filled me with fear and foreboding, they passed it off as just a harmless dream.

The two years after my return to Warsaw passed quickly, filled with fun and readjustment to life in Poland. I enrolled at the Warsaw-based division of the Sorbonne, which offered courses in some studies. Most of my academic program was filled by art courses for the remainder of my education. Although they were far from my goals in medicine, the art courses were interesting and absorbed some of my attention.

During that time, I also resumed my relationship with Mark. Although I was no longer his student, we were still very compatible and I shared the experiences I had gained in Brussels with him. We became closer and I began to see him in a way that was different than before. Besides being my friend and confidante, I began to love him. He came from a fine family, friends of my family since my father had been alive. He was intelligent, well-mannered and ambitious. Like me, he was independent and had definite goals. Someday, he would be a successful architect. Most importantly, he understood me. He

accepted me as I was and never demanded that I play the role of the typical dependent female. He respected the fact that I had a brain that worked every bit as well as his.

In 1930, admid the world-wide repercussions of the Depression, EMPE, my family's business, began to experience hard times. On the advice of Jacob, who sought to enlarge the business, my mother had invested most of her assets in the expansion that Jacob had devised. In addition to the importing of raw leather from South America and the United States and the wholesale distribution of it to industries, Jacob thought it wise to build our own tannery. Naturally, the machinery and skilled labor for such an enterprise amounted to a sizable investment, so my mother's assets, as well as Jacob's, were used to finance the new business.

As in most businesses at that time, it was the world economic conditions that sealed the fate of the tannery. At another time, it might have prospered, but in 1930, it brought the business near collapse and drained my mother and Jacob's resources almost completely. Disheartened by the situation and robbed of confidence, Jacob stepped aside as head of the business and I took over. Although I hadn't any formal business education, it didn't take long for me to realize that I knew more about the business than I thought. From family conversations over the years, it had been possible for me to absorb information about the nooks and crannies of it almost by osmosis. To my own surprise at first, I was capable of being

decisive and maintaining the contacts that my father and brother had built up around the world. I accepted the challenge of putting our ailing business back into the profit-making category.

Even though I was proud of my independence, I realized that some of my father's business associates might be able to offer some suggestions about solving our financial problems. I went to see Alexander Weigle, one of Warsaw's biggest industrialists, to ask his opinions and advice. Because his relationship with my father had been long and fruitful for both, I trusted him completely. His bond with my father had been forged with mutual respect and kindness so I told him about our situation honestly, hiding nothing. If the right decision weren't made and money wasn't pumped back into the business, EMPE would be bankrupt and my mother's financial security ruined.

I had no preparation for the help that Weigle was capable of offering. I expected advice and got much more. Weigle marketed some of the finest leather in Poland. He owned tanneries and the processed leather he sold was only offered for a few to sell at the retail level. He offered to let us sell his merchandise in order to attract business. Accurately, he reasoned that these articles, which would sell quickly, would pump some cash back into the business quickly. It was the solution that we needed. After we began marketing Weigle's leather goods, the business began its slow road to recovery.

I was happy and absorbed in running the business, which started to be more profitable in 1930 and 1931. I continued to see Mark during those two years. We spoke of no plans for the future and I wasn't aware that I loved him. He continued to visit me, mostly at home. Gradually, I became sensitive to the fact that my mother disapproved of him. There were never any harsh words between us about the subject, but I saw that my mother had no appreciation of Mark's personal value to me.

In those times, living according to the desires of one's parents was the rule of life. Like most other women of my generation, my mother's wishes were important to me. I always deferred to her judgement, although I never confided in her or expressed my feelings to her about important issues. My mother began a campaign to promote my happy marriage in 1931. She told me that I should be thinking of marriage because it was time for me to marry. She reminded me often that I had two younger sisters to think of. They would soon be of marriage-able age, but it would have been unthinkable for them to make their plans before me. It was my mother's opinion that I ought to marry so that my sisters could live their lives and that I shouldn't stand in the way of their happiness. After months of sermons on the subject, I began to think that my mother might be right.

Mark proposed to me during that time. In my heart, I was overjoyed at his proposal, but in my mind I knew that I could never accept. At that age I wasn't mature enough to question or challenge my mother's disapproval. I explained to Mark that I couldn't marry him because my mother's disapproval would place a strain between us. He stopped coming to the house to see me, but I never stopped thinking of him as my friend.

Meanwhile, my mother went to work at finding me a suitable husband according to her standards. I was introduced to a young man named Jerry, whose family was acquainted with mine. According to my mother, he was right for me. He came from a good family, had a fine education and was of good character. As an engineer, he would always be able to earn a good income and provide a secure home for me. We were married in 1932.

I was very happy when I became pregnant. Although I hid my condition for as long as possible so that I could continue to work, I looked forward to having a child. I thought that it would be interesting to raise a child, perhaps even be fun. After my seventh month, when it was obvious that I was pregnant, I stayed home and planned for the arrival of my baby. In those days it wasn't proper for a woman to work at a business, in the public eye, while she was pregnant.

Alice was born on February 18, 1933. She was something of a wonder to me at first, as every first child is to its mother. I began to realize then that being a parent is a tremendous responsibility. I saw that, for the first time in my life, another human being was totally dependent on me. I resolved to be the best mother that I could be.

It didn't take me long to realize that there was much I needed to learn if I was going to live up to my goal. I had been wonderfully educated, much more so than most girls my age. But after Alice's birth, I saw that one aspect of my education had been sorely neglected. I had never been taught to change diapers, feed a newborn, give her a bath or quiet her crying. I could manage in the outside world very well, keep the business going, oversee the accounts, make large purchases, plan the selling of our leathers goods and direct all our employees. But I was lost when it came to taking care of Alice. My pride was dented, but I had to do something. Alice needed someone competent to care for her, not someone who only guessed at what was the right thing to do at the right time. So I made a very unconventional decision for a woman during those times. I faced the fact that I wasn't very good at some of the things that Alice needed done for her. That, I reasoned, didn't mean that I was less of a mother. I had to turn my daughter's physical care over to

someone more competent in that area than I. That way, she wouldn't suffer from my lack of knowledge and I wouldn't feel so inadequate at the entire task of being a mother. I could still concentrate on the most important part of being a mother: teaching my daughter to become a competent human being herself, devoting time to becoming close to her, devoting energy to watching her.

I hired a baby nurse. Janina was a hardy woman about 30 when she came to live with us. She was very capable where Alice's care was concerned. It wasn't long before I felt much more relaxed about being a mother. To me, with Alice being so young, it was useless for me to stay home all day. The business still needed help before it would be healthy again. Rather than languish at home, which irritated me and made me feel useless, I decided to go back to work. When Alice was a baby, I didn't work all day, but I stayed as long as it took to keep things going. I had plenty of energy to function at work and have something to give my child at the end of the day. I must admit that when one has household help that is reliable, it makes energy go much further. I had enough energy for both the business and my family because I wasn't drained by housework, laundry, and cooking. From the time that Alice was born until 1939, I enjoyed being a working mother.

Each year, the business became more and more healthy. Because of the help we received from Weigle, our financial problems receded little by little. I was working at making things stable. My mother's security was no longer in jeopardy. Then came the rise of Hitler in Germany. It turned our attention to the threat we perceived on our horizons.

We had many conversations in the family about the anti-Semitism that Hitler espoused. As racist outbreaks spread within Germany, we looked on in alarm. We knew that, of all the countries of Eastern Europe, none was more anti-Semitic than Poland. Although Poland had the largest Jewish population of all the Eastern countries, it wasn't until 1921 that our right to form Jewish cultural and ethnic societies was granted. Even after that, anti-Semitism was always present in Polish life. In every large city, there was a strictly Jewish neighborhood. Although Jews were educated in the public schools, there was still discrimination against them in the University, similar to what I had experienced. Not much had changed since then.

Chapter II

Throughout the summer of 1939 I was still receiving letters from my sister Celine in Belgium. She and her husband were as certain as we were that war was inevitable. We all knew that it was only a short distance away. Celine was concerned for us in Poland because of the anti-Semitism. We all knew that Poland would be an ideal breeding ground for Hitler's anti-Jewish policies.

Because of my sureness about the situation, I began to make my own preparations for war and I urged my family to do likewise. I reasoned that when war came it would be fruitless to try to sell valuables. I thought it best at that time to hide them with some of my Gentile business friends. I turned first to Alexander Weigle, my father's old friend, taking my most valuable pieces of jewelry. I asked that he hide them for me, perhaps among his wife's things in their

bank vault. Perhaps he foresaw things more accurately than I because he refused. He explained his position, which could develop into a dangerous one during a war with the Germans. He was from a German family, though he had been born in Poland. He was enormously wealthy. Both he and his business enterprises were well known. He suspected that the Germans, therefore, would watch him more closely than the ordinary citizens, even seek him out because of his wealth and background. He didn't want to take the risk of hiding my things amongst his own. I was greatly disappointed by his refusal then, but very thankful for it later.

I turned then to friends for help. A wealthy client, Edmund Karlowicz, who had been buying leather from us for years, agreed to take some leather from the business and hide it. Another client, Pfieffer, also hid some of our leather. My friend Schwerin took some of my personal things, some crystal, silver, porcelains and other furnishings.

As I stripped our apartment of all my most treasured things, I became angry and depressed. I remembered the little sentimental memories attached to many of the pieces of silver and crystal. As I wrapped things to be spirited away, I wondered when I would see them again. My reason said that I might need the cash value of my treasures more than the things themselves if there was war. If I needed to sell them for

cash, my friends would have more freedom and more connections than I.

Early in August I met the man who was to become a saviour to me and my family later on. Sturdy, blonde and open-faced, Zenon Schonfeld, stood at my door one day introducing himself. He explained that Alexander Weigle had sent him to us, Weigle wanted us to know one another. He and Schonfeld knew what was coming for us because we were Jewish. We would need help, he said, when the Germans came. Weigle wanted to know what he and Schonfeld could do for us. Although Zenon didn't say what his connection with Weigle was, I trusted him immediately, partly because I trusted Weigle. But it was Zenon himself who inspired trust, too. He had a friendly, direct manner and seemed to know all about us. Although I couldn't think of anything that we needed from him that day, I assured him that I would call on him if I did need something later. After he left, I wondered why Weigle had sent him to us, expecially in the light of my old friend's refusal to hide my jewelry for me. The whole thing didn't make sense to me then, so I didn't waste time worrying about it. I accepted the fact that, in his own way, Weigle was still my friend.

During the summer of 1939 I worried about more than my possessions. As I made preparations for myself, I realized that my mother would have no one to watch out for her during

a war. My younger sisters Gustava and Evie still lived with her, but they were too young to cope with emergencies like war. My mother was about sixty then and she had been a dependent woman all her life. My father had taken care of her every need while he was alive, and the eldest among us had taken up her care when he died. With age, she had developed severe arthritis and her mobility was limited. I knew that it would be impossible for her to take care of herself and my sisters when the bad times came.

The best solution seemed for us to move in with her until we saw how things were going to be for us. I was sure then that our move would be only temporary, so after I stored my valuables quietly among my friends, I decided to leave everything else, our household furnishings, in our own apartment. There was plenty of room at my mother's apartment for us, at least for a short-term stay. On August 31, we left quietly for my mother's house, saying nothing to our landlord about our move. We had only one day to settle in on Franciskanska St. before the war began.

Part of my preparatory plan included finding an extra place for my mother in case of bombing. Her apartment was on the second floor of the building, and her arthritic condition would make it impossible for her to move quickly to the cellars if we had to go. So I arranged with some neigh-

bors in the building to rent a room for the duration. They lived directly over the stairwell to the cellars, making it easier for my mother to get downstairs if she had to.

There was one last preparation that I made before the war came that I made in secrecy. I had no idea what was coming, but I had one firm resolution: if it was within my power to prevent it, neither I nor anyone I loved would die in a brutal and degrading way at German hands. I would not sit passively by and let my family be slaughtered by the invaders. I knew that I would rather see them die at my own hands in peace and with some dignity than be treated like animals. During one of my trips to the pharmacy to get some medical supplies for our larder, I bought some poison. I got Gardenal pills, used as rat poison. These could easily be concealed in clothing and worked quickly. I bought enough for us all, told no one and carried them with me always in the days to come.

During the day on August 31, 1939 my husband was at his office at KiachtaIndar. The company, a huge import corporation, had offices in many countries. That warm day, the owner from the French branch arrived in a frenzy of excitement. News of the impending German invasion of Poland had been received inside Europe. Fearing for her own safety, the woman owner had fled Russia by car and had come to Warsaw. Once at the

office, she called the workers together and warned them about the certainty of war. She instructed some of them to divide the tea and other supplies in the warehouse among themselves and close the office that day. If they could, she said, they should get out of the country, even to Russia. Then, she drew my husband aside from the rest. She handed him the keys to the car used by office personnel. She told him to take the car, pack the family into it, and leave the city. She wouldn't need the car any more, since she was leaving for Paris. What reason she had for instructing the workers to go to Russia while she headed for Paris we never found out.

My husband brought the car home with him that day. Together we discussed the question of leaving Warsaw. We had the means of escape, but the problem was who to take with us. Even if we crowded together, there wasn't room enough for everyone in the family. Besides my husband and me, there was Alice, my mother and sisters. My husband also had some family in the city. It would be impossible to pack everyone into the one car. Likewise, it was impossible to leave without taking everyone at once. How could we leave with some of the family and leave others behind? The thoughts of going to Russia, anti-Semitic and socialist, held no promise of safety for us. After considering our alternatives, we decided not to use the car. Perhaps we could find a more desirable escape route to

Italy or Belgium before winter and the Germans came. We hoped that they would hold off their attack until the spring. Whatever happened we had one firm resolution: we would stay until we could leave together.

On the night of August 31, 1939, we were all gathered around the radio, expecting to hear an announcement concerning a battle with the Germans somewhere in Poland. Even then, as I sat listening and trying to imagine what bombing, German occupation and food shortages would be like, my conjured images couldn't compare with the realities I saw later on. Along with my family I sat listening naively.

We didn't have long to wait. Shortly before dawn the dreaded announcement came. The station played the national anthem and the announcer said that the Germans had launched their attack. They were assailing Poland from every possible position: from the north by sea, along the eastern border by land and by air. Our nebulous fears had materialized. The Germans were coming to take Poland.

Soon after that announcement Warsaw felt the first impact of the German attack. The bombing began, the first shells screaming down on the city and the flares making the morning darkness look like noon. All of us, long since dressed, ran for the cellars, changing instantaneously from rational people into fear-struck half-people. There wasn't time to gather even

the barest of necessities, only to run for the shelters.

The bombs came closer as we ran down the stairs. I could feel the building which had felt so strong and secure, vibrate and sway beneath my feet. I didn't say much to Alice because I was so frightened myself, but it would have been in vain if I had tried to talk to her then. She couldn't have heard a word above the shouting and screaming of our neighbors and the booming of the shells as they rained on Warsaw. I anticipated staying in the cellars for only a few hours, until the bombing was over and Germans went away. My mind still could not cope with the reality of what was happening. Even after all my realistic preparations, I still thought that everything would be fine in a few days. We would have a normal life again. War, destruction, privation, loss and even death were still only shadowy abstracts, things that happened only to others. I had much to learn about the reality of war.

Once in the dark cellars, I began to look for my mother. When I found her, our little group huddled together in the dark, like the others. There in the dark I thought about myself, my mother and my child. Things were changing so fast. In childhood, I had thought that my mother held all the safety in the world in her hands. Now I was responsible for her and and for my own child as well. I was beginning to realize that there was no one who could protect me.

At first, the noise in the shelter was unbearable. People screamed, shouted, scrambled for places together, even yelled prayers. In the background, like a chorus, came the steady explosions from the shells. Once we settled down, I took hold of Alice and did my best to comfort her and answer her questions. I wanted to protect her, but as I heard the shells and felt the building above us tremble, I knew that there was nothing I could do to make things easier for her. So I just held her close and listened to the panic around us subside.

After a few hours, the people became calmer, but the bombs never stopped. I began to look at the place we were in. It was dark, chilly and damp. There was no water, food or sanitary facilities. During the entire day, while the bombs dropped, we had nothing to eat or drink. I tried to sleep, since we had had so little sleep the night before. But sleep was impossible, with so many people together.

Someone improvised primitive toilet facilities in the shelter after our first few hours, but I can't remember what they were like. After the first day in the shelter, the hours and days ran together in a blur. We just huddled there, tired, hungry and frightened, while the bombs kept exploding outside. At intervals, when things were quiet, some of us ran upstairs for food and water. I remember that Jerry made some trips and that I went at least once, but I can't recall when or what we

brought back with us.

After about a week in the shelter, the inevitable happened. Our building was hit by a shell. All of us would have to move to the shelter across the street. As we scrambled outside for the first time in days, the bombs exploded around us. I realized how vulnerable we were, even in the shelter. As I ran along with Alice I saw the destruction the shelling had wreaked upon our building. Windows were broken everywhere and parts of the building were gone or sagging crazily. I stole glances at the neighborhood, thinking how fragile were the things that humans built and how easily things came apart.

As we scrambled frantically for the entrance to the shelter, it was hit by a shell. Those of us approaching it then were left with no place to go. Panic-stricken, I thought of my cousin, who lived nearby. Maybe we could go and stay with her. She was the daughter of one of the cousins my father had taken in and raised, who had married and recently had a son. She lived on Panska St., many blocks from Franciskanska St. We ran all the way, holding onto Alice. We stayed with my cousins, the Sowas in their shelter for about three days. Then we decided to try to return to the cellars in our own building on Franciskanska St. My cousin wished us luck as we left. That was the last time I ever saw her.

We made a run through the streets back to our own building. Then it was back to the shelter for about ten more days. It seemed like an eternity in those cellars. Then on October 1 we got the news: Poland had surrendered. Her army had dispersed, abandoned by its generals. The Germans took Poland.

A few hours after the bombings stopped, we began to creep out of the shelter and make our way upstairs. No matter where I looked there was dust and broken glass. When we got back to the apartment, it was a mess. Every window was shattered and broken glass had sprayed everywhere. The curtains on the windows were hanging in sad shreds. There was no electricity, no gas for cooking. Worst of all, there was no running water to clean up with. No one had any idea where to get water. It was October and the weather was getting chilly. I wondered what we would do for heat all winter.

To make matters more unpleasant, my mother and I were both sick. During our last days in the shelter, there was no drinking water. Someone had offered us some wine. We were so thirsty that we drank it gladly. Both of us developed nausea and diarrhea. The first few days back in our apartment all we could do was recuperate from our dose of wine.

Those first few days after the surrender were strange and disorganized. The city was in a shambles. Many buildings had toppled, streets were blown up and covered with rubble.

Naturally, there were no shops open. No one cared about anything except cleaning up their homes and trying to get things like food and water. Since no one knew what to expect from the Germans, everyone stayed at home. We tried to get in touch with some of the family to find out if they had survived the bombardment.

Jacob, his wife and two sons had lived on Ślota St., outside the Jewish section. One day, right after the German occupation began, they arrived on Franciskanska St. They had lost their home and had no place to stay. By moving some furniture and rearranging the dining room, living room and bedroom space, we all fit in. There were ten of us living in five rooms, but we made the best of it since we thought that the situation would only be temporary.

In the middle of our reshuffling for living space, I was contacted by Alexander Weigle. An employee of his called on us, saying that Weigle was concerned for our safety and wanted to know if we needed anything. Since the phone lines were out, he had sent this man across town to look after us. I was grateful for my friend's solicitude. It made me feel more secure to know that someone cared about how we were faring. The man had a message for me from Weigle, asking me to come to see him that day. I explained that I couldn't come with him since my mother and I were both so sick from

our encounter with the wine. I sent a message that I would come as soon as possible.

About three days after the bombs stopped, the Germans emerged in full force on the Warsaw streets. They staged a lengthy parade with the soldiers dressed in full uniform. Obviously, they wanted to impress us with the fact that they were conquerors, capable of maintaining their victory. They strutted around as if they were heroes, promising to restore order quickly. In a way, they were ridiculous, since they seemed so oblivious to the fact that we hated them.

A curfew was ordered, supposedly for the safety of all. The Germans organized a campaign to clear away the debris in the streets. Soldiers patrolled the streets of the Jewish section constantly, forcibly recruiting candidates for the clean-up parties. Any Jewish man who looked healthy enough to lift a broom or a shovel was picked up on the street and taken to work. The community reacted by keeping its men indoors. Jewish women did the errands and conducted necessary business while the men remained at home. This was a drastic change for most Jewish women who were used to relying on their men to assume responsibilities.

The forced labor parties were only the beginning, but they served the purpose of warning us that our expectations of hardship for Jews would be fulfilled. Anti-Semitism would

no longer be our hidden enemy in Poland. During the clean-up, orders came that merchants in the city would re-open their shops, but Jewish merchants got special orders. They had to display the Star of David prominently in the front window of their shops. Bank accounts were blocked as of October 12, 1939. Citizens were told that they could only withdraw certain amounts of cash, however Jews were again singled out. We could only withdraw a very low figure compared to Aryans. On October 16, 1939 the Germans declared that all Polish citizens, except Jews, were eligible for public assistance.

I thought it best that we begin to accumulate as much food and other supplies as we could store in the apartment. I was afraid that, if limits were placed on the amount of food we could buy, that there wouldn't be enough to feed all of us properly. To get food in large quantities required large amounts of cash. I needed to go to the bank. I thought of my appointment with Weigle and his offer to help us. With my brown hair and blue eyes and Weigle at my side, no one would question me at the bank when I asked for the Aryan quota of cash from my account.

I walked to my appointment with Weigle, expecting an easy time and feeling secure because my friend would be with me. On arriving at his office, I saw Germans. Coolly, Weigle introduced me as his friend. My voice trembled as he introduced me to a tall, austere officer, General Frank. Frank, Weigle

explained to me, was the governor-general of the district of Warsaw, appointed by the Reich to rule the capital and its surrounding territory. I nodded dumbly and watched Weigle for clues about what to do. He ushered us outside where a car was waiting to take all of us for a ride. They would stop on the way at the Bank of Poland so that I could transact my business.

All during the ride, Weigle and Frank chattered about the condition of the city as if they were sightseeing. I had never seen this side of my friend before, this man who could converse with German generals as if they were fellow tourists. Too afraid to speak, lest I betray myself and my friend, I sat in the car. We stopped at the bank and I got my money. Then Weigle told me to get back in the car so that they could take me home. I wanted to run, but I stayed calm for the sake of my friend. Back in the car, we headed toward the Jewish quarter. At the sight of the neighborhood, the other officer asked Frank if this was the ghetto. Frank's reply froze my insides. No, he replied, this was only the forerunner of the ghetto.

Frank's words rang in my ears as I walked home. Weigle had left me off at a corner on the edge of the Jewish quarter after a casual goodbye. We had exchanged no personal conversation, but he had treated me to an experience that had said more than hours of talk.

After my excursion to the bank I began to organize the collection of food for our larder. Because I was able to pay cash, each time I went to the shops I was able to buy extra items besides those for immediate use. At the end of a few weeks, we had a large store of hams, sausages, bacon and preserves as well as several fifty-pound sacks of sugar, flour, and rice. I made sure that before winter came we had enough food in the house to last until spring.

Like many of my neighbors I saw that it was necessary to find a hiding place for my husband, brother and nephews. Besides nabbing men on the streets for the work details, the Germans had started coming into Jewish homes and apartments looking for men to put to work. There were some rumors that some of the men being taken weren't coming back. We were lucky to have an attic in the building on Franciskanska St. It was fortunate, too that my mother's apartment had two entrances, one in the front and one in the rear. Someone could leave the back door without being seen by a person at the front door, circle through the halls and get to the attic quickly. We all discussed the hiding place and the plan of action in case the Germans came.

Not long after our discussion, we got our first opportunity to use the attic hiding place. Some German soldiers came through the building, on a searching expedition. While they kicked at

the door, I ushered the men out the kitchen entrance. Then I answered. Barging in, they asked where the men were. Looking blank, I made believe that I didn't understand German, although I spoke it fluently. I answered them in French, which surprised them. I hoped that speaking to them in French would confuse them about the fact that we were Jews. Speaking also in French, they repeated their question. I told them that the men were away in the army. That seemed to satisfy them but they made no move to leave. Instead, they looked around at the apartment. Then they began to open drawers and cupboards, pocketing some of the contents.

I was frightened for Alice. Although she didn't understand the Germans' questions, she was clearly upset by their arrogant manner and their theivery. I took her aside while the men wandered through the apartment. She wanted to know why they were taking our things. I didn't want to frighten her so I told her that they were heroes and that they were entitled to a reward for their fighting. She calmed down a little, and they left when they had filled their pockets with whatever appealed to them. I was outraged by the situation, but I tried to stay calm for her sake. I saw no point in conditioning my daughter to become paralyzed with fear at the sight of a German.

The winter of 1939 made its entrance early. By November the snow was deep and the ice thick on the windows. ~~The Germans~~

The Germans had rationed fuel, so our building was cold most of the time. We all wore extra layers of clothes, but it didn't help much. Many days we laid in our beds all bundled up because it was too cold to get out from under the blankets. There were many other visits from the Germans that winter. I was constantly on guard for the sound of their boots in the hall. We always went through the same routine. The men went out the back while the Germans kicked at the door. I answered when the men were safely out. I never let on that I understood German. Speaking to them in French always disconcerted them enough to make them doubt that we were Jewish. My mother and sisters never spoke while they were there.

A few times they came looking for leather. They must have been told by someone that we had owned a leather business. They would come and take what they wanted, telling me that I wouldn't need the leather anyway, and leave. After the first few times, Alice knew what was going on, but like the rest of us, she got used to it. In November 1939 all Jewish land in Poland was confiscated. That meant that the property we had owned outside Warsaw, the house in Sochaczew where we had lived when I was young and where I had grown up, was gone. My brother Wolf and his wife and children had been given the house by my father, to give them a start in life. We had had no word from them since the beginning of the occupation. I wondered what they would do

if the house and land was taken away from them. They had two babies now to take care of.

I had long since stopped thinking about the business. With things getting more dangerous by the day, the business didn't matter anymore. All I thought about was keeping the people in our family safe.

As we had anticipated, the Germans were taking full advantage of Polish anti-Semitism. They encouraged the Polish Gentiles to vent their hidden antagonism toward the Jews. They singled us out so that we would make easy targets for hostility. They issued us ration cards that were far lower in calories than Polish Gentiles. They demanded that Jews move off the streets to make room for Germans. On November 23, 1939 they issued the order that all Jews must identify themselves as such by wearing armbands. They propangandized constantly about how much the Jews took from the Polish economy and how little they contributed. It is surprising, but the Jewish Community never fought back with propaganda of its own. It never fought the stereotype of the rich, urban Jew with the fact that most of Poland's Jews were poor, rural farmers and craftsmen.

Immediately after the Germans began to be obvious on the streets of the city the underground had began its activities. From the beginning there were smuggling operations and information channels operated by the underground all over Warsaw.

One of the first and most important things that the underground did right after the Germans conquered Poland was to get the printing presses set up and functioning. Most of us in the ghetto knew what was coming, at least in general, once the Germans arrived. Many Polish people, Jewish and Aryan, tried to flee the country, as we had been advised to do. They had to obtain false identification papers and false passports. Those who could afford to get these papers turned to the underground sources who provided them. My husband knew of one such source through his friend Ignatz Greenstein.

His friend suggested that we gather all the cash we had and take it to one of the shops in the ghetto that was a cover-up for the underground. We decided that it was worth trying. We had hidden some of the cash we had obtained from the sale of our valuables and some gold in the apartment. One day, my husband took it all and went to the shop where he knew there was a chance of buying a false passport. He took our papers along with the money, so that the passports would contain correct information in case they were checked. He left the money and papers and was told to come back in a few days for the documents. On the appointed day, he returned to Franciskienska St. with three passports to Italy. There was only one for him, for Alice and for me.

I had been agreeable to the plan from the beginning, but I

had not anticipated the difficulty of leaving the rest of my family behind. Now that I was faced again with the possibility of escape, I found that going wasn't as easy as I had thought. Once I realized that I would have to leave the rest of my family behind to meet an unknown, but certainly horrible, fate, I couldn't bring myself to use the Italian passports. I was determined that either we would all be saved or that we would die together. So was my husband.

Early during the winter of 1939, the family business was closed and confiscated by the Germans. By Nazi order all businesses owned by Jews in Warsaw were no more. The buildings that housed them were either closed or used for other purposes. If the building contained any machinery, as ours did, that machinery was operated by forced labor parties and the production was entirely controlled by the Germans. For us the effect was devastating. The business that my father had spent a lifetime establishing and that my brothers and I had worked so hard to continue, was gone. For us, it just didn't exist anymore. There was no payment, of course, for the building or the machinery. It was just gone, taken away.

Soon after the business disappeared I met again with Alexander Weigle. My father's old friend was genuinely concerned with the fate of our family. He asked me what I intended to do. We all knew that the future for the Jews of Warsaw looked bleak.

I confessed to him that I had obtained some Italian passports. He was glad and urged me to use them. I told him that I was reluctant to use them because we had been unable to obtain enough for the entire family. My mother, my brother and his family would have to be left behind if I used the three passports I had. He urged me to go anyway. He advised that I take all the jewelry that I had hidden through my various friends on the Aryan side of the city. I should have the gold melted down, he said, and have the stones loosened from their settings, like all the other escapees were doing. The precious stones could be hidden more easily that way. The Germans would never allow us to leave the country with anything of value and the jewelry left in its settings might put them wise to the fact that our papers had been illegally obtained. If the jewels were hidden singly, perhaps mounted as buttons and sewn onto Alice's and my underwear, they would pass unnoticed at the border and we could escape. But I told him that it wasn't the money that worried me the most. It was leaving my family, especially my mother, behind. My father's friend was undaunted. He urged me still to leave. He would take care of my mother. He would see that no harm came to her. I was touched by the loyalty and the generosity of my father's friend.

I tried to explain my predicament to him. I trusted him implicitly. I knew that his motives were of the best quality.

But I couldn't place such a burden on him. My mother was my responsibility, not his. I knew that he would do everything in his power to protect her. But there might come events over which he would have no control. He was a powerful man, even with the Germans. But there might come a time when they might turn on him, too. Rather than have him feel guilty about not being able to keep his promise to me and carry that guilt with him for life, I must stay. I must try to keep the family together and alive as long as I could. That was the way I thought best at the time.

Early during the occupation there was one time that our hiding place in the attic failed to achieve its purpose. One day Germans came storming into our building, looking for workers for some project going on in the city. Before my husband could escape out the back entrance, they burst in the door and caught him. He was loaded aboard a truck waiting outside, while the Germans went looking in the building for other potential workers. I decided to try my hand at bribery. Like so many in the neighborhood, I had heard the stories about the men who were taken to work and never returned. I approached one of the Germans who had come into our apartment.

Nonchalantly, I told him that Jerry wouldn't be of much use to them if strenuous work was involved. I offered money, assuring them that they would be wasting their time using him

for hard labor. I was panicky when the man waved the cash aside. When the search of the building ended, the truck with Jerry in it pulled away.

When the crew arrived at its destination, the German must have thought better of his decision to refuse the bribe. Either that, or he wanted a sure place to return to for more money in the future. Anyway, he asked Jerry for the address where he had been picked up. Suspecting the worst, Jerry quickly invented a tale. He told the German that he knew neither the address or my name. He explained that he had been in our apartment by accident, looking for someone, when the search for workers had been instigated.

The German would have done much better to take the money and the advice I offered him about Jerry's capacity for manual labor. Once off the truck, the men on the work party were told to start picking up some rails lying in a pile and move them to another spot. Jerry dropped the first one that he picked up, right on his foot. Since the foot was hurt badly enough to make him slow at walking and lifting, he was deemed useless for the work detail. The Germans loaded him back on a truck and he was deposited back in the Jewish quarter.

Soon, after the occupation began, my brother Mandel contacted us. He and his wife, Rose, lived in the Jewish section, not far from my mother's. They had two sons, who were about

twelve and fourteen at that time. Like all the young people in the Jewish section of Warsaw Mandel's sons were aware of German violence against the Jews. Being active young boys who were feeling the first independence of youth, they were determined to rebel in any way possible. They chose to flee the situation and go to Russia. They tried to persuade their parents that the whole family should go. They planned to go east, avoiding main roads until they reached the Russian border. Sneaking across was much easier in the woodlands. Mandel and Rose refused to go. Mandel had had stomach problems for years and wasn't robust. A long and surreptitious trek through the forests, moving mostly at night, was fearsome for him. Finally, the boys set out alone. The family parted, not knowing, when, if ever, they would be reunited. In the months ahead, besides the trauma of what was happening in Warsaw, my brother and his wife bore the sorrow of not knowing the whereabouts of their sons, or if they had made it to the eastern border.

By the time of Gustava's wedding, the ghetto was beginning to swell with people. From the first, the Germans had been operating in the small towns throughout Poland, rounding up Jews. We didn't realize it at first, but the confiscation of Jewish land and property was beginning to have its effect before 1939 was finished. Jews began arriving from the countryside, most of them dispossessed and poor. Allowed to leave their homes with

very few possessions, they arrived in Warsaw as refugees, homeless and without resources. The Judenrat set up a few centers in the Jewish quarter to give the refugees shelter. They opened soup kitchens to feed them, however inadequately. Their main purpose was, at first, to keep them off the streets and alive. Then the Judenrat was ordered to find homes in the neighborhood for the refugees. So, a housing committee was set up whose duty it was to assign refugee families to share the homes of Jewish families. The census taken in October helped the Council determine who had the most room per family.

A little before the wedding we received our first boarders. They arrived one day, a family of three, with orders from the Judenrat that we were to house them. Again we had to reshuffle our living arrangements. By placing huge wardrobes in the living room and dining room of the apartment as dividers, each family had some small measure of privacy. The refugee family, whose name escapes me, were given a room of their own, where the three of them lived, ate and slept. They had a small coal stove where they cooked their meals.

During that time, our larder of stored food was most useful. Also, the inevitable smugglers had begun to operate in the Jewish section, setting up a thriving business in selling meats, dairy products and any fresh vegetables that could be had. To Jews, these items were invaluable, since they were not in-

cluded in the rations assigned to us. According to the ration plan set up by the Germans, Jews were allowed about half the calorie count given to other citizens. The Jewish allotment of calories per day only allowed the purchase of bread, potatoes and some fat. Unless one had the money to buy meat and dairy products from the smugglers, whose prices were high, subsistence on the fat and carbohydrate ration was the only choice. By winter, when the refugees were beginning to come into Warsaw in noticeable groups, hunger began to be a daily problem for many.

Because we had reserves to draw on, we were luckier than most, for a while at least. We could afford to pay the prices the smugglers demanded for their supplies. We didn't have to go out on the streets to get food, risking the German patrols, who harassed us constantly. The smugglers, knowing their regular customers, came to our door with their goods when they had them.

The German plan to confine the Jews became a public proclamation on December 11, 1939. We were forbidden to change our residence. No Jew could move outside the Jewish section of the city. Without permission from the Judenrat, we weren't allowed to move to another apartment in the Jewish section either. A special curfew was also enacted for Jews. The orders were that no Jew, with his armband making him

obvious was allowed on the street between 9 P.M. and 5 A.M. The penalty for violating the curfew was death.

Soon after the arrival of the first refugee family, another "relocated Jew" arrived at our apartment. His name was also Pinczewski, like ours, but he was no relation to us. The Judenrat, thinking that he was, had assigned him, and his niece who accompanied him, to us. Including the new arrivals, there were now fifteen people living in our apartment, with one bathroom for us all. Again we rearranged and subdivided.

Pinczewski wasn't with us long before he told us what had happened to him. Like the other family who lived with us, he came from a small town, Kielce. He and most of the other Jews in his town had been rounded up by the Germans and sent to Warsaw. Up to the time that he arrived, we all believed that all the Germans wanted to do to us was confine us and segregate us from the rest of Poland. There had even been some talk of resettling Warsaw Jews in other parts of the country, but they hadn't been officially announced so we held them as rumors. With Pinczewski's arrival, we got a clearer picture of what the German plan for the Jews actually was.

He told us about the fate of Jews in one of the small towns that he had been in. All had been rounded up and told to go to the church one evening. The next morning, at gunpoint, everyone was ordered into an open place outside the village.

Those able were told to dig a large trench. Then the pit was dug, everyone was ordered to stand along the edge facing the hole. Then all were shot in the back, and pushed forward into the open mass grave that they had dug.

Pinczewski's story left us all dumbfounded. It was difficult to believe that this was actually going on in Poland. The Germans were killing people and no one was stopping them. I asked the man what he intended to do about letting others know, especially those in authority. I told him that I thought he should go to the Judenrat and tell them what he knew. I was shocked when he said that he had already been to the Council. He had gone to them when he had first arrived in Warsaw. They had listened to his account and then told him to keep silent. They asked him not to tell others what he had seen because the news would spread panic in the midst of the hardship that was already developing in the Jewish section. Pinczewski had left the Council meeting fearful and disheartened, but determined not to obey the order for silence.

Hearing the refugee's story was a turning point for me. From that time on, I never believed anything the Germans announced about relocation or confinement of Jews. It was clear to me that their purpose was to kill us all, one way or the other. I also realized, with shock and disappointment, that the Judenrat was not a help to us. I saw its members as

tools of the Germans, aiding them in their plans to torture, humiliate and kill us all. The Judenrat and the Jewish police, because they feared for their own safety, were the lackeys of the S.S., nothing more.

The whole situation became clear to me then. Something had to be done to help ourselves or we were all going to perish. I had no idea exactly what was going to happen to us, but I knew that unless somebody did something, we were going to die. Contrary to my earlier vision of things, this was to be no mere period of hardship and repression. The fear, the hiding, the disruption of our lives was only the beginning. The only question was what would come after. I began to fear the German patrols more than ever.

I didn't realize it then, but it was at this point that I began to undergo changes within myself. Mentally, I abandoned my wait-and-see attitude completely. Now, I perceived myself in the midst of a life and death struggle. The civilized life that I had enjoyed only four months before this had evaporated like a mist. It seemed like a dream, barely remembered. The person that I was in those civilized surroundings began to seem like a stranger. From the time of Pinczewski's arrival, the poison that I had purchased became a real possibility to me. The fact that I must use it occurred to me more often as I envisioned the scene that our boarder had recounted. Deep inside

I accepted the fact that we were all in mortal danger. My reaction to that fact was a resolution to struggle and fend for myself. I also accepted the fact that no one was going to help us except ourselves. From that point on, my mind was always alert to all possibilities in any given situation. I started to operate with my mind going at full speed all the time. A situation that could be deadly began to have signals that went off like sirens in my mind. Instinct and the survival impulse put careful, rational thought to rest.

The tempo of our lives had changed markedly in the months since September. The chaos of the bombs had very quickly yielded to the pressure to keep abreast of the changes in our daily lives. In four months we had witnessed the entire rearrangement of our lives. We had to buy food in clandestine circumstances, instead of shopping openly. We never knew when our home would be invaded by the Germans and our men dragged away for work or God knows what. Our property simply disappeared into German hands and our source of income with it. We were living strictly on the good fortune of the past that was bound to have an end just as it had a beginning. We couldn't go visiting our friends in the evening if we wanted to, because of the curfew. We had to wear the armbands to single us out in public. Total strangers were ordered into our homes to live and we had no recourse but to comply with the orders. Little by

little all semblance of normalcy was being taken from our lives. At first, it had been like a puzzle, with pieces being added every time the Germans issued new orders for the Jews. At first, because things were happening so quickly, it was hard to perceive the picture that the pieces were part of. But after Pinczewski's story, the picture fell into place. I recalled my dream then. I still didn't know what it meant, since no scene similar to it had yet occurred. The only thing that I was sure of during the winter of 1939-40 was that the dream had a meaning for me.

Chapter III

After the New Year passed unnoticed and uncelebrated, there were new orders. As of January 26, 1940, no Jews were allowed on the trains in Poland. That eliminated the possibility of Jews moving from one town to the other or using the railroads as exit points from the cities.

We sat out the rest of that winter, carefully using the store of food we had. A woman we knew bought food from the smugglers and we paid her outrageous sums for veal, beef, butter and milk, when we could get those things. As uncomfortable as the adults all were with the overcrowding, Alice didn't seem disturbed by it all. Under the crowded conditions everyone tried to be as accomodating as possible and since most of the people around her were family members, my daughter had no reason to feel upset. At that time, the other family, who also had a daughter, were taking care of themselves satis-

factorily. So none of us had any reason to be a burden to the others and conflict was absent. Our boarders ate as well as we did because, even though they hadn't accumulated any food, they were able to buy from the smugglers as we did. A few weeks after he came, Pinczewski and his niece left. Because of the crowded conditions, he decided to try to get out of Warsaw. We never heard from him again.

As winter became spring, the flood of refugees pouring into Warsaw increased. Since most of them had no place to go, the streets became more and more crowded. With their few belongings in sacks beside them, many of the families lived in the streets. Since they had no jobs, many of them begged from passersby. The streets of the Jewish section became clogged with refuse and human waste. There were many children, whose parents had either been lost or killed in the relocation, who simply wandered the streets, dirty, hungry and alone. The Judenrat arranged placement for many of them in Jewish orphanages, but there came a time when it was impossible for all of them to be accommodated. The streets were the only space they had. Meanwhile, new refugees arrived daily.

There was one particular family that I remember seeing repeatedly out one of our windows. For me they became an indicator and a gauge of the worsening conditions in the neighborhood. There was a father, mother and several children.

With the mother pushing the youngest child in a dilapidated baby carriage, they would travel our block on Franciskanska St. calling up to the windows for bread as they passed by.

By the spring of 1940, hunger was beginning to take its toll among those who were the poorest in the streets. Although I didn't go out often then, every time I did, I encountered the same sight: Corpses lying along the way, sometimes covered with newspaper, sometimes just staring with blank eyes at nothing. The bodies laid there until Pinckert, the Jewish undertaker, came and carted them away.

Another change in the streets began that spring. Walls of stone and brick began to appear at various locations around the edges of the Jewish quarter. At first, the sections were small and disconnected, with some of the Jewish blocks outside them. Then we began to notice that the frequency of the search parties increased. More and more Jewish men were rounded up by the Jewish police for "public works". After a few months we saw the relationship between the two occurrences. The walls were getting longer and the sections were getting closer and closer together and more men were needed all the time. By the time we had all heard of the establishment of ghettos in other cities. We knew long before the German orders that the enclosed ghetto was to be our fate too. Each time I saw the walls, I thought of Gen. Frank's remark.

By the time that the warm weather came in 1940, Gustava was a widow. Her husband, never a robust fellow, got pneumonia and died. We helped her as much as we could. It was so sad to see someone her age burying a young husband. The sadness was doubled because of the conditions surrounding us all. After the burial, Gustava came to stay with us again. Like all of us she had changed noticeably. It was an older, more mature and serious Gustava who returned to us that spring. In July came the announcement we had all expected. The Germans ordered that the city was to be partitioned off, with Jews restricted to our section. In dividing the area, they lopped off several blocks where Jewish families had always lived, making the Jewish quarter smaller than it had been. The orders said that no Jew could live outside the section. The orders also said that Gentiles still living in the Jewish area had to move. All summer and fall, until the deadline for the completion of the moves, there was a mad shuffle going on as people moved in and out. Meanwhile the refugees kept coming.

It was during the summer of 1940 that rumors began to fly in the ghetto about the establishment of the camps. There were places, said the news of the streets, where Jews were taken to work for the Germans. Eventually, the Germans hoped to place all of the Jews of Europe in these camps, where conditions were severe and families were separated. It was said that inside

Germany, several of the camps were already in operation. There were plans to establish camps in Poland. Because of my earlier preparation, I believed the rumors. I believed that the Germans were going to keep going until they killed us all.

With so many people, homeless, hungry and without sanitary facilities, crowded into such a small area, sickness and disease were inevitable. Because it was impossible to walk down the streets without being jostled against others on all sides, typhus soon appeared and gained momentum. It was easy for the white, repulsive lice which transmit typhus to travel from host to host on the streets and in the homes. All we could do to combat the situation was to stay at home more than ever and to spend more time keeping the house immaculately clean.

That summer and fall we managed to keep the epidemic away from our house. Many weren't so fortunate. On the rare occasions when I went out, there were many more corpses lying in the streets. When I got home, I checked myself carefully to make sure that I wasn't carrying any of the dreaded lice with me. Our larder was holding up, but I saw that it couldn't last much longer. If we were careful, we would make it through the next winter with additions from the smugglers. A few times during that period, Zenon was able to help us with

food staples. Once or twice, he got us huge 50 kilo bags of rice, which we stored. A few times, I ventured out of the Jewish area, which was forbidden without permission, to get money from my bank account. Each time I went, I was reminded that, with our reserves dwindling, we would have no means of support before too long. I tried to push away the thought of waht we would have to do then by reminding myself that we were much better off than so many others behind the ever-growing walls.

The family of beggars that I had noticed before kept coming to Franciskanska St. The next time that I remember noticing them, there was no baby in the carriage. The next youngest child had been loaded aboard for the ride.

In the fall of 1940 we began to worry about how we were going to cook and keep warm that winter. Everyone's coal was strictly rationed, with the ration for Jews amounting to much less than everyone else's. We noticed that the basement floor was covered with small pieces of coal which had spilled during the loadings. We had never enrolled for the food and coal rations. We thought it safer to stay away from official sources. So we went to the basement and gathered the scraps from the floor.

Throughout the summer of 1940 my brother Mandel's physical condition began to deteriorate rapidly. Since milk and fresh

dairy products had stopped coming into the ghetto in steady supply during the winter of 1939 and 40, his ulcer had gotten steadily worse. As the cold weather approached, he grew weaker and his pain increased. Despite the money we still had, it was impossible to get any milk for his prescribed diet. There was no medicine available inside the walls to ease his condition, no matter how much money one had to spend.

We saw his wife, Rose, frequently that winter. It was difficult for them to get food, so we shared what we had with them. Mandel had owned his own business and had prospered, but even the wealthy couldn't get food in the ghetto. There was just not enough to be had. When she could, Rose visited us, but later when my brother's weakness and pain confined him to bed, we had to go to her. My mother and I took food and walked the short distance to their apartment whenever conditions permitted.

Each time we went, we could see that Mandel's condition was getting worse. His handsome face became pale and emaciated. His once-lively expression became pinched with pain. The light of life in his eyes faded. Although he was only in his early forties, he looked old and withered. We kept up our efforts to get milk through the smugglers in the streets of the ghetto, but we had no success. Even the black marketeers were stymied by the Germans when it came to dairy products. As the winter

progressed, it was obvious that Mandel was dying. Most probably, he was bleeding internally by that time. There was nothing we could do except watch it happen. It was frustrating to stand by while he died so painfully. It made me angry to have money that could have bought the things to save his life and not be able to get those things. They were a million miles away, across the ghetto walls. It enraged me to watch Rose try to care for Mandel with nothing to help her save him. It must have tortured her to be unable to help him. It must have tortured my mother to watch her son dying for want of the simplest food and medicine.

Added to Rose's ordeal of caring for Mandel was her continued worry and sorrow over the absence of her two sons. They had returned from Russia briefly during the summer of 1940. Both had returned deliberately at great risk to induce their parents to escape with them back to Russia. But their efforts led to nothing. By the time the boys came, Mandel was already too sick and weak to consider their plans. So, after their brief stay, both boys, only about eleven and thirteen, left again for Russia. All the time that their father was dying, Rose knew nothing of their whereabouts, except that they were somewhere beyond the Russian-Polish border.

In November, 1940, Mandel realized that he was dying.

He began to talk about it openly during our visits. It surprised me that he was so resigned to his death while I was so angry. He never complained about his pain or denounced the Germans who were causing his death. He seemed to accept the entire situation as it was, including the inevitability of his own death. During the last few days, when he was slipping away more rapidly, he began to talk, when he could, about religious matters. When he had the strength, he would sing softly to himself. I couldn't determine whether he was singing hymns or just other music.

Shortly before Christmas, Mandel's ordeal was over. Despite conditions in the ghetto, there was a burial service for him in the Jewish cemetery on Gensia St.

His death had a profound effect on me, but I didn't realize it until after the war. Before he had died, my strong brother, I had believed that, despite the chaos in Poland and the rumors about conditions in the rest of the world, we would all come out of it somehow. I believed that my family was somehow invulnerable. The war, the bombs, the fire, the food shortages, the brutality, the murder were all around me every day. I believed that they existed and that they threatened us all. But I thought that we would all make it. Those things would never touch us because we were strong and good. If we used our heads and helped each other, we would all survive.

Now I see that Mandel's death was the first time that I had to face the fact that I might be wrong about my subconscious visions of things. It drove a big hole through my safe, secure dream. The realization that the Germans were killing people by starving them to death in the ghettos hit me like a silent grenade. It was because of them that my brother was dead. When they went away, no matter what anyone did to punish them, Mandel would still be dead. I had come face to face with irreparable loss. Now I see that Mandel's death prepared me for what I had to face later. It was my initiation into the brotherhood of loss. For the first time I was afraid that we would all die, as I had seen other families die. For the first time, the poison that I carried meant more than a remote alternative.

It was during the winter of 1941, just after Mandel's death that news reached me about my third oldest brother, Wolf. Before my father died, he had given Wolf the country house and property in Sohachew to get him started financially. Wolf had gone into business for himself and married a girl from Sohachew. They had two young sons who were about three and six when the war came.

Once the ghetto was sealed, communication with anyone outside the walls became risky, if not impossible. Even though Wolf and his wife were only about sixty miles away from

us, we had had no communication with them since the fall of Warsaw.

Then, in the streets of the ghetto, I met one of our former neighbors from the country. They were among thousands of Jews from all over the Polish countryside who had been relocated to the ghetto. I was anxious and afraid when I asked them about my brother.

Their report was brief and horrible. Wolf, his wife and their two sons were all dead, they said. Like the others in the town, they had been rounded up to be transported to one of the ghettos. But instead of being relocated, they had all been shot in the street.

Shaken, I discussed the matter with my husband. I felt that, despite my sorrow, we should not tell my mother about the death of her son and his family. It would serve no purpose for her to know. There was nothing we could do for any of them now, except to pray for them silently. There was no reason to add the shock of Wolf's death to the pain of Mandel's. We agreed to say nothing about it to her until the war ended, if it ever did.

Mandel's death had been awful, but it had had some resemblance to death in the normal context of life. Mandel had been ill; we had nursed him. He had accepted his end and died in our presence. There had been the small group of us to cry

together and comfort one another. There had been the burial service and the place to lay him to rest. Mandel's death had frightened me, but Wolf's filled me with dark and ineffable terror. It was completely outside the boundaries of any normalcy. It was violent and senseless and brutal. It had happened without our knowledge. There could be no comfort from a burial service. There were no bodies to pray over and bury. There would be no resting place where we could go to remember them. Mandel's death had been real to me but Wolf's never could be. It was not an event which I witnessed, but a dark vision in my imagination. There were no normal channels for the grief I felt. I cried over something that was beyond my reach.

Now I realize that Wolf's death caused my vision of our ultimate safety to crumble more rapidly. I began to think that it was possible that when the Germans left, all of us might be gone.

With the crowded conditions in the ghetto, the spread of disease was inevitable. In 1939, the population of the area that became the ghetto was about 360,000. By January 1941 that number had swelled to almost 500,000. That is, those who remained alive numbered that many. Even with the starvation, disease, suicides and shooting that eliminated many thousands, the ghetto was still swelling. The houses were

dangerously overcrowded. The Judenrat had their refugee centers and their orphanages, but more people than ever were living in the streets. Overcrowding, the homelessness of so many and lack of even the most elementary sanitation all abbeted the typhus epidemic that broke out in the ghetto. The lice that transmitted the disease reproduced easily in the filth of the streets and travelled quickly as people jostled each other in every public thoroughfare.

Like others who had a roof over their heads, and running water, we took extra measures to keep clean in spite of our crowded circumstances. To avoid the crowds, as well as the Germans, we only went out when that was necessary. We checked our clothing and the furniture frequently. Whenever someone ventured into the streets we inspected his clothing when he returned.

One day during January, 1941 my husband went out and, when he returned home, I found a fat, white louse on the sleeve of his coat. A day or so later, he began to show typhus symptoms. He ran a high fever, began vomiting and had diarrhea. His temperature climbed so high that he became delirious. By that time medicines were unavailable in the ghetto. The antidote for typhus, which was used in other places, was kept out of the enclosure. Even the smugglers couldn't get it.

It was our neighbor, a dentist named Greenwald, who helped us as best he could. He had kept some of the supplies that he had used in his practice before the war. He gave me some medicines that helped reduce fever and ease the intestinal pain and the aches caused by dehydration. They served their purpose, but they could do nothing to eliminate the disease itself. We had to hope that Jerry was strong enough to stay alive until the typhus had run its course. For almost three months, he lay feverish and delirious at times.

I had a cousin who was a nurse. When Jerry first became ill, she came to help out. She advised that we send Alice to stay with Jacob temporarily, so that she wouldn't be infected. My brother and his wife had found a place of their own during the fall, so they had moved out. That had eased our overcrowding enabling us to isolate Jerry somewhat from the rest of the family. When the sickness came, the whole family redoubled its efforts to keep clean and free of contamination. We washed everything more frequently and examined every corner of the apartment, looking for traces of the lice. We found no hidden lairs of the destestable creatures, but we kept watch.

During that winter, another family arrived with housing orders from the Judenrat. There were four of them, the mother and father and two sons, about ten and twelve. I went to the Council headquarters to protest the order. There were already

ten os us, counting my cousin who was caring for Jerry, crowded into the apartment. Another family living there would force us to reshuffle our living space again, leaving no room to isolate Jerry. I argued with the official at the Council headquarters that we were already doing our share to ease the ghetto overcrowding, but it was useless. I returned home angry and disheartened. During the routine check of my clothes as soon as I arrived home, I found one of the dreaded lice on the kerchief I wore.

Luckily, I wasn't nearly as debilitated by the typhus as Jerry. The worst of it passed in about two weeks, even the inadequate medicines we were able to get. As spring came in 1941, I recovered my strength.

As I recovered, a greater hazard loomed ahead of us all. Our illnesses had drastically decreased the money that I had hidden with my friends outside the ghetto. I had enough left to keep us going for a while, but beyond that was uncertainty. Much of my cash was gone, along with some of my valuables. The gold pieces that I had hidden in the coal bin in the apartment and in holes in the walls would buy food for a short time. They would only be useful while there was food to buy. The woman who was our liason with the smugglers was coming less frequently now and the goods were becoming more meager with each visit. Between contacts, we had to find food in the ghetto.

We continued to use the rice that Zenon had gotten us, along with the fat and flour we were able to buy inside the walls. There were days now when we were hungry. There was a little money, but nothing to buy. I tried to console myself by considering the plight of those who lived on the streets, starving and dying each day, but I wondered silently how much longer we could last.

Chapter IV

All during 1940, the ghetto walls had continued to grow. By the beginning of 1941, the ghetto existed in fact. The Jewish quarter was entirely surrounded and cut off from the rest of Warsaw. Mail from the outside was unobtainable, and telephone service was gone. Checkpoints had been established to control the flow of people from behind the walls. Only those who had jobs in Aryan Warsaw were permitted past the checkpoints on a daily basis. Long before the announcement proclaiming the ghetto, the enclosure had become an isolated, mad little world in itself. Within the walls, there was starvation, random killing of Jews by the S.S. and disease. When the order came in February 1941 that no Jews were allowed on public transportation anywhere, it was a joke. Most of the Jews in Poland, if Warsaw was any example, were so restricted in the ghettos that they had no further use for public

transportation. They had no food, no jobs, no way, except through the underground, of calling attention to their plight.

All during the building of the walls, the Germans had been escalating the propaganda against Jews throughout Poland. By 1941, when the walls were complete, both sides of the wall were equally dangerous for Jews. There was always a gang of Poles to be seen near the walls on the Aryan side. They lurked there constantly, waiting for Jews to attempt escape over the top. They also waited for the smugglers, in order to catch them with their supply of goods. Many of the smugglers were children, small enough to scramble up the sides of the walls quickly, or to fit through one of the small openings that had been knocked out. As more and more Poles went on the alert at the walls, smuggling became more and more risky. Many of the children were caught and killed. The increased risk drove the price of smuggled goods ever higher, adding to the burden of starvation that was already unbearable for most of us.

Those of us inside who could, survived in any way possible. During the spring and summer of 1941, we were often hungry. One time, I can remember my husband and I discussing the problem of dividing the food we had on hand. There was one slice of bread left in the house. Together, we pondered whether to give it to my mother, who was growing more infirmed each day, or to Alice. To give each one half of the slice would have

left them both hungry. I reasoned that my mother, who was without the recuperative powers that a child possessed, needed the bread more. Alice, I thought, would perhaps have many years ahead to assuage her hunger. My husband and I agreed that my mother would benefit most from the slice of bread.

Those of us who couldn't cope with the madness of the world we lived in either attempted suicide, died in the streets or went mad. That spring I saw the beggar family again. They were making their customary rounds on Franciskanska St. calling for bread. Now only two or three of the large brood of children remained, the youngest riding in the carriage with the family's bundle of belongings. There appeared others on the streets, beggars gone mad from the hopelessness they lived in each day. One of them was a man who stood atop the overpass from the Big Ghetto to the Little Ghetto at Zelasna St. each day. Perched there, he sang crazy songs the whole day long. Another man wandered the streets, delightedly exhorting passersby that now inequality between the rich and poor didn't exist anymore. Grinning crazily he proclaimed that "Everyone is equal!"

During the summer that year, more Jews were used to work in the German-run shops that had sprung up inside the walls. Walter C. Toebbens and a man named Schultz owned the shops, which produced clothing and leather goods for the German army.

The poverty and starvation were so bad that people scrambled to get work papers. Only those who possessed a permit could work in the shops. There, for a few zlotys a week, they were locked in during the day while the Germans guarded the factories. At noon, they received a portion of watery soup as part of their pay. The shops were a trial, but they promised the possibility of survival.

During this time also the blockades began. The Germans said that only those who weren't "parasites" would be allowed to remain in the ghetto. No Jews who couldn't work would be allowed to stay. That meant that the elderly and the children had no place in the ghetto. The rumors multiplied crazily about what was going to happen. Most ominous of all were those about relocation that began to circulate. The "work camps" were already in operation, the gossip said. Soon those who weren't working in the ghettos would be shipped to the camps. With the inception of the blockades late in 1941, Treblinka became part of the ghetto vocabulary. It was a work camp, they said, soon to be completed.

It was during that summer and fall that many in our family disappeared in the blockades. At first the Jewish police would conduct the blockades, designed to root out those who were unproductive. While those who worked in the shops were away, the police would surround an entire building with

armed men. Then they would shout orders that all inside come out to have their papers checked. Only the immediate families of those who were working would be permitted to stay behind. The rest, mostly the elderly, the sick, and young children would be led away. There were only rumors about what happened to them after that. Some of them were seen at the Umchlagplatz, the railway station positioned near the Dzika St. exit from the ghetto. Later on we knew what happened to all those who were taken from there, but in the beginning all we knew was that people disappeared. I knew that no one would ever see the disappearing ones again.

My brother Jacob had gone to work in one of the ghetto factories soon after he had moved out of our apartment to Freta St. Naturally, his sons, who had married, stayed with my brother and his wife because of the overcrowding. No one knows exactly what happened to those who were home the day of the blockade. When Jacob came home from work, his entire family was gone. From those of the neighbors that saw the blockade of his building, and from those who were left behind by the Jewish police, he was able to piece together an outline of what happened. During the blockade, in the confusion, his wife, his sons and their young wives had all been taken away. After the Jewish police had left, no one had ever seen them again.

Since Mandel's death, we had been used to seeing Rose fairly frequently. She came over to see us when she could, at least once or twice a week. One week, we noticed that it had been more than a week since her last visit. I went out to find her. Her neighbors told me about the blockade of her building. They hadn't seen her, nor had they noticed whether or not she had been taken in the blockade. We never saw her or heard anything about her after that.

By the end of 1941, all of Jerry's family that had remained in Poland after the invasion was gone, disappeared like Rose. Jerry's mother had died before the war and his father had died of natural causes right after the occupation began. One of his three sisters had left Poland for Israel when the Germans invaded the Sudetenland. Two sisters, each with a husband and young children, disappeared in the early blockades. By the winter of 1941-42, our once-large family had grown considerably smaller.

Death became our constant companion in those days. Each day our grief became a heavier burden, coupled with the fear and hunger that devoured us constantly. We faced another winter without heat or food. Everyone in the ghetto lived on hope alone. We hoped that the Allies would help us, if we could stay alive until they came. During that time, I lived on anger and revenge. I vowed that I would struggle

until the very end, do whatever I had to in order to survive. I recognized that there was little chance that I would see the end, so my packet of poison became a necessity of life. Often during those times I asked myself whether or not I should give it to my mother. For myself, all I wanted was to live long enough to drive a knife through the heart of just one German.

On Yom Kippur, 1941 came the formal announcement of the formation of the ghetto. Because things had been so bad for so long, the announcement was nothing more than a formality for the Jews inside the walls. Then came the announcement about how the Jews would be contained within the walls. The orders were that those Jews caught leaving the ghetto without permission would be shot immediately. The Poles were offered a few zlotys for turning over any Jew whom they caught escaping over to the Gestapo. In November came the order that any Gentile caught helping Jews escape from the ghetto or any Gentile caught hiding Jews would be put to death. For all intents, the ghetto was like a massive tomb. Only those who were working in the ghetto shops had any hope of survival, and those only until some order came to dispose of them.

All we did that winter was stay indoors and try to hang on. Most of the time our coal bin was empty. For the second

winter, we wrapped blankets around ourselves during the day to keep from freezing. When one of us could slip out for food, we ate. There was very little money left in the hiding places in the house. Even though it was still there, it wasn't very helpful. Most of the time during that winter, there was nothing to buy. Before that time I had never thought about the experience of being hungry for long periods of time. I never realized that being hungry, day after day, month after month, brings out all that is negative in the human personality. Hunger makes people greedy, selfish, ruthless, depressed, lethargic, negative, cruel. Seeing my own child hungry and having nothing to give her made me all those things. My own hunger made me angrier than ever toward the Germans. My resolution to take at least one German with me when I died became stronger than ever.

During that winter, because I had time to think about it, I realized that my daughter was in terrible condition, as were all the children of the ghetto. Together with the adults, she was experiencing all the hardships imposed on the Jews. She was hungry constantly. She knew that some of our family had disappeared and were dead somewhere. She heard the grown-ups talking about the hopelessness of our situation. She knew what the Germans were doing to us all. Her childhood had disappeared with the invasion. There was no time or place for

her to play. She wasn't allowed outside the apartment because of the German patrols. Together with all the adults, she was concentrating on survival. I tried to teach her to be brave. For her sake, her father and I tried to be brave. Each time something awful happened, we tried not to let her see our deepening panic. While we all suffered together, she behaved like a little adult. She prepared herself well for what was coming. She never disobeyed any order that I gave her. Her instinct for danger was already working strongly within her.

As soon as the winter receded in 1942, Jerry and I decided to get jobs. At the rate we were going, we couldn't survive much longer on what was left in the coal bin. Going to work in the shops would assure us temporarily of at least one thing: survival for ourselves and Alice. The blockades weren't an immediate threat to those who were working. My sister Evie, who was then about fourteen, decided to go to work also, as had Gustava. Among us we would have enough to survive on. Perhaps we could even save something for the next winter. Naturally, my mother was in no condition to work. I worried about the fact that she would be home alone all day, but there was no alternative. If we all stayed home, without the Kenkarte (work permit), sooner or later we would all be taken in a blockade. With the majority of us working, there was a better chance for survival.

May, June and early July passed quickly with the grinding routine of work in the shops. Jerry and I got up very early, dressed ourselves and Alice and went to work. The shops where we worked were on Lesno St., quite a distance from our apartment on Franciskanska St. I took Alice with me, so that she would be safe. A few of the women where I worked did the same thing. They dared not leave their children at home because of the blockades, which were becoming more frequent. Once at work, while the foreman and the guards weren't looking, I hid Alice. There were rules against having children in the shops, but they weren't stringently enforced at first. While the shop foreman wasn't looking, I would hide Alice under the pile of clothes that lay next to my machine. She would stay there all day until noon, when we shared the portion of soup I got along with my wages. Then she burrowed back under the pile of clothes until it was time to go home.

The shops were a perfect breeding ground for rumors that spring. Many insisted that things would continue as they were indefinitely. Demoralized by the conditions in the ghetto, they clung to every scrap of hope they were thrown by the Germans. But there were those of us who knew better. I saw my employment at Toebbens as only a temporary stall against the inevitable. I believed those who said that the Germans were planning something else for us. The gossip said that

railroad cars would soon be arriving at the Umschlagplatz in large numbers. The Germans were planning to make Warsaw "Judenrein", just as they had done in sections of Germany itself. They were going to ship us all elsewhere. Eventually, we would all be deported to someplace worse than the ghetto. There were those who believed that we would all be relocated somewhere near Russia, but I wasn't one of them. To me, the word "Judenrein" meant death. I remembered what our visitor, Pinczewski, had told us about the treatment of Jews elsewhere. I had no false notions that anything had changed in the Germans' attitude toward us. I held to my own beliefs while the gossips chattered at the shop. In the background, more and more frequently came the dreaded sound of the Gestapo sirens that heralded all the blockades.

On July 23, 1942 the massive deportations began. For days beforehand, there had been rumors that empty railroad cars were waiting at the Umschlagplatz. The Judenrat was ordered to supply 6,000 persons per day for relocation. Jewish police were to be utilized to round up the victims, first from the prisons and jails and from the refugee centers, then from the streets and the apartment buildings. The only ones exempt from deportation then were those employed in the ghetto shops. To facilitate matters, the Germans figured out a way to separate the workers from the potential deportees.

That afternoon, the authorities in our shop on Lesno St. announced that we would not be allowed to go home. We would be detained at the shop until the "clean-up" operation was complete.

At the close of the work day, we were led out into the fenced-in yard behind the factory to spend the night. There was a huge mound of fabric scraps in the yard, illuminated by spotlights placed around the edges of the fences. Everyone crawled on top of the mound, weak from the ever-present hunger and the heat of the shop. The pile of scraps served as our beds, chairs and latrines for the next four days. We got no extra food at night, so we had to wait until the next noon's allotment of soup to keep from fainting. But the worst part wasn't the hunger or the smell of the excrement accumulated on the scrap pile. It was lying there hour after hour hearing gunfire and wondering what was happening to my family on Franciskanska St., blocks away. Not knowing how they were and not being able to get word to them that Alice and I were alive was torture. There wasn't a chance of slipping away from the shop. During the day we were locked into the factory and at night we were locked into the yard.

On the fifth day we were released when the work day was over. Alice and I ran all the way home. Jerry, Evie and Gustava were there when we arrived, but I noticed immediately

that my mother was missing. In answer to my inquiries about her, they cried and led me silently to her room. I looked at the blood on the sheets of her bed and the red spatterings on the wall and knew immediately what had happened. Jerry told me the details.

They had all been at work on the third day of my absence and my mother had been home alone. There had been a blockade of our building, with the routine order for all to appear in the courtyard for sorting out. My mother had been ill, finding it especially difficult to walk much. The malnutrition and stress had been aggravating her arthritis, so she didn't go downstairs during the blockade. The Germans had come through the building later, looking for anyone who might be hiding. They had found my mother alone in her bed and shot her. Jerry, Evie and Gustava had found her when they arrived home that night.

I couldn't believe that my mother was dead. I asked what had happened to her body. My husband assured me that he had called Pinkert and that she would be given a proper burial in the Jewish cemetery. But I couldn't believe that, either. In the end, Alice and I threw ourselves across her bloodstained bed and cried ourselves to sleep. All I could think of that night, and for many nights thereafter, was that I should have given her one of the poison capsules

that I carried with me. I reproached myself for not doing it sooner, when the rumors of the deportations began. I should have assured her a peaceful death before the Germans had a chance to do this to her. I thought constantly of the part of the Yom Kippur prayers that my mother used to recite. It was the prayer for protection from sudden death.

During the night, the routine of the blockade repeated itself. We were all awakened by someone making an announcement in the courtyard. The orders were that beginning at six we were to present ourselves at the Umschlagplatz for relocation. We would be allowed to bring a few pounds of luggage with us. The police would round us up in the morning. I was so dazed by grief and hunger that I hardly heard the order, much less comprehended its meaning for us.

Early in the morning we were awakened by the sounds of people leaving the building. Jerry and Evie went to their shop located across the courtyard in the same building as our apartment. I decided that I would go to work as usual and take Alice with me even though we were both tired and shocked from my mother's death. It would be safer at work than in our apartment. Walking down toward Lesno St. I noticed that there were many more troops in the street than usual, most of them Ukrainians. Nearing the section of Lesno St. where the factory was, I saw that there would be no work for us that day.

The street was blocked off and the workers were being told to go to Dzika St., where the Umschlagplatz was located.

I struggled to hold down the fear rising inside me. Alice and I were alone. We couldn't get into the shop and couldn't return home. There was no way for me to contact Jerry or Evie. There was nothing else to do but to go along with the others for the time being. I had to have time to think and the walk from Lesno to Dzika St. would give me that. Perhaps my work card and my somewhat healthy appearance would save us from the trains and death.

As Alice and I approached Dzika St., the thoroughfares became clogged with people. The crowds were being ordered inside the fence of the Umschlagplatz and we went with the others. The process of checking people's papers was going on and there was a long line in front of the Germans who were sorting out the crowd. Even though it was still early, it was already hot. People were milling around everywhere and the smell of unwashed bodies and excrement was smothering.

As I stood in the long line with the others, I held tightly to Alice's hand and tried to think of what to do and how to act. The buzzing of the huge black flies perched all over droned in my ears. I made up my mind to rely on the instinct of the moment, as I had so often in the past. It had never failed me before and I hoped that my luck would hold

out again. One thing was uppermost in my mind: I was not going to go passively aboard the transports to die.

When my turn came, I stepped in front of the German inspector, holding Alice behind me and boldly waving my work papers in front of my face. While in line I had noticed that most of those with working papers had been told to go to the right, which meant back to work. The only exceptions were those with many children. People with big families were sent to the left, along with the aged and those without working papers. By standing in front of Alice, I hoped that the German's attention would remain on my papers. Perhaps because of that, perhaps because of fate alone, I was directed to the right. With a sigh, I walked over to join the group of people waiting to be released. Alice and I had escaped the trains for the first time.

It was late afternoon by the time we were released, so I went home, not knowing what to expect once I got there. Alice and I hadn't eaten for days and we were both exhausted. Jerry and Evie were already home when I arrived, anxious to see us. Their shop had not been disturbed during the day, so they would have had no idea what had happened to us if we had been loaded onto the trains. They had already noticed that many people in our building had not returned from work that day. We considered ourselves lucky to be together just one more day.

Chapter V

The plans of the Germans to "clean up" the ghetto had been underway for months. The acceleration of the deportations that had begun in July continued relentlessly throughout the summer of 1942. By August, the ghetto was in a chaotic state. Those of us who had work cards clung to them furiously, for they were the only insurance against the transports. There were blockades all over the ghetto every day so that the Germans' daily quota for the trains would be filled. Of course, we had no time to take headcounts, but we saw that the blockades were taking their toll. After July, when 64,706 people were shoved aboard the transports, certain segments of the population began to be noticeably absent. One saw fewer beggars, old people and children. Considered the most useless of the ghetto's inhabitants, not possessing the Kenkarte, they were the most susceptible in the blockade.

The tension and anxiety filled the very air of the enclosure. No one knew when his apartment building would be singled out for a blockade. No one who worked and left family members at home knew who he would find there at day's end. Despite the lessening population, there was as much hunger as ever. The smuggler's were seriously hampered in their operations so food became more scarce and prices went berserk. On July 29, the Germans, hoping to expedite the deportations, had offered a supply of bread and marmalade to those who went to the transports voluntarily. Everyone's hunger was so great and hopes so sunken that many accepted the bread and jam. Despite the growing knowledge that the transports meant death, many must have figured that voluntary deportation was a way of keeping loved ones together. They hoped that facing the unknown together would be better than meeting sudden death in the blockades or a slower agony by starvation. The fear, the hunger, the terrorism and the brutality had worn down most of the ghetto's inhabitants. Exhausted mentally and physically, thousands passively trouped to the Umschlagplatz each day.

I couldn't think of following their example and neither could my husband. To me, it was insane to volunteer to die. It is possible that, in the very beginning, those who went voluntarily believed the German propaganda that they were to resettle in the east. We never believed that. We remembered

the stories that our visitor Pinczewski had told us about the Lublin ghetto and the killings. We never doubted, especially after my mother's brutal death, that the Germans intended to kill us all. Instead of making me submissive, that knowledge enraged me. It was my unvented anger that made me determined to stay alive as long as I could. Then I often said that I wanted to live long enough to drive a knife through a German's heart. Also, it was Alice who kept up my resolve. I knew that it was up to me to protect her as long as I could. Alone, she would die quickly.

As the deportations continued into August with ever-increasing momentum, I became more alert than ever to dangerous possibilities. It seemed as though my thoughts ran at high speed all the time. She was with me constantly. I took her to work with me, along with many of the other women in the shop who feared for their children. Now there was no one at home during the day to leave her with. My mother was gone. Leaving her home alone was unthinkable. The authorities at work had forbidden us to harbor our children in the shop but we all disobeyed the orders. Knowing that our little ones were hidden nearby was less dangerous to us than entrusting them to others' care or hiding them all day at home.

The fact that my daughter could remain hidden beside me

underneath a pile of clothes or in the worker's coat room is only one indication of how unnatural her childhood had become. Under normal circumstances, it would be impossible to keep a seven-year-old quiet and motionless all day. But I never worried about Alice getting restless and making noise. She was intelligent and sensitive and she had seen all the horrors of the ghetto. She understood that she would die if the Germans discovered her hiding place. So despite the heat, her hunger, the need to go to the bathroom and her restlessness, she had the maturity and self-control to restrain herself. Day after day she laid beside my work space or crouched in the dark coat room nearby.

I never considered how great her fear was or how the hiding affected her until one day when German soldiers came into the factory. They stomped through the shop, the noise of their boots coming near to the pile at my side. Finally, after looking around, they left. That afternoon, when it was time for lunch and Alice could come out from under the clothes for some of my soup, I saw the toll that fear was taking on my child. She held out her hand and showed me her bottom front tooth. In her nervousness she had worked it loose and pulled it out.

While it was known that no Jew in the ghetto was completely safe, there were a few people whom no one thought the

Germans would touch. Everyone was wrong, of course, but they went on thinking it just the same. They seemed to derive some comfort from the illusion that there were some among them who were too valuable to the conquerors to be disposed of like so much meat. One of the renowned personages of the ghetto whom everyone regarded as too famous for the Germans to harass was the beloved Janus Korczak. Korczak was the pen name of one of the most respected figures in the Polish medical world, Henryk Goldszmidt. In 1911, he had taken over an orphanage in Warsaw, being one of the leading child psychologists in the world and the author of several children's books.

At the orphanage, he lived among the children, eating with them, studying with them and loving them. Periodically, he wrote and published his children's stories and the results of his observations and studies among the orphans he collected. His fame as both a scientist and folk hero spread throughout Poland and the rest of Europe.

When the Germans established their regime in Warsaw, eliminating so many of the intelligentsia, the Jews of the ghetto watched the fate of Korczak and his orphans carefully, as if it was a barometer of their own fate. At first, they expected that the orphanage would be taken immediately, being viewed as a useless drain on the enclosure. But month after month proved them wrong. Korczak and his children continued

to live in their house in the ghetto and Korczak continued to make his rounds of the ghetto sources to dredge up funds. After a time, seeing the orphanage untouched, the Jews of the enclosure came to regard the venerable figure as a kind of good luck charm. He was too saintly and famous for the Germans to harm, they told themselves. They thought that even the Nazi beasts had some respect for his self-sacrifice and love. They concluded that, no matter what, Korczak and his children would be safe. They and he both turned a deaf ear to the warnings from Gentile friends to get out while there was still time. Everyone knew that Korczak had turned down many offers of escape.

As the weeks of the first transports passed and Korczak and his orphans still remained, both hope and despair grew among those who knew about him. Hope grew in the hearts of those who struggled to become indispensable to the Germans. Many believed that, if they had skills that were valuable enough, rare enough, specialized enough, the Germans would let them live. A work permit became a straw to be grasped at most assiduously. It could mean a few more days of life. To others, who watched Korczak and his orphans getting thinner by the day, despair came closer each day. They saw doctor and children as marked figures, even though heroic. Those who had despaired waited for the axe to fall on the orphanage.

My younger sister, Gustava, was one of the ones who hoped. In the summer of 1941, her young engineer husband had died. Left alone with no support, she had come to live with in the apartment on Franciskanska St. She was young, attractive and spirited, despite the sorrow she had already endured. At nineteen, she was hopeful that something would happen to rescue us all before the end came. Like me, she was determined to survive until then. She reasoned that one of the safest places for her to work was at the Korczak orphanage, taking care of the children. There she would be useful and immune from the blockades. She succeeded in getting a job there early in August.

Then came the day, August 12, 1942, when the Germans did the unthinkable: they issued an order that the Korczak orphanage was to be cleaned out immediately. They told the beloved doctor that he could stay, but that the children were being deported. Most probably, it was done that way with full knowledge of what Korczak would do. They knew that Korczak had vowed that the children's fate would be his also. By giving him the opportunity to abandon them, they hoped to trap him into being his own executioner.

Many legends have evolved about what happened as the Gestapo emptied the orphanage at gunpoint. The most popular account says that the noble doctor told the children that they

were going to the trains. Organizing them into a body, he reassured them that he would never leave them. Then, singing with them to the accompaniment of a tiny violinist in the group, Korczak and the children paraded en masse to the Umschlagplatz. Carrying two of the toddlers in his starvation-weakened arms, he and the bedraggled group boarded the transports to Treblinka, still singing. Once there, stripped and pushed into the gas chambers, the story goes, Korczak's voice could be heard encouraging the children to breathe deeply, thus hastening the agony of their death.

I have no way of knowing exactly what happened to Gustava on that dreadful day. She didn't come home from work on August 12, or the next day. When word of the closing of the home reached us, we made inquiries in the neighborhood. But it was impossible to gather any concrete information because of the shock and confusion that had surrounded the blockade. Gustava might have been released by some of the Germans along with some others who worked there, only to be caught by others. She might have decided that she would follow the example of Korczak and attend to the children no matter what. She might have accompanied the group at a distance, becoming included along the way to the station. From what we could find out, we could only guess what might have happened to her. But one fact was certain: Gustava was included in the group from the orphanage that had

been put on the transports that day. Given that information, her fate was certain. She died at Treblinka soon afterwards.

Again death had visited my family. There was one less in our midst. Again it seemed that some giant and malicious hand had plucked one of my loved ones from our family circle. I felt the return of the hopelessness that had come with my mother's death. I could do nothing to fight that giant, sinister hand that was decimating my family. When it overshadowed us, which was every day now, there was nothing I could do to protect my own. Again deprived of the chance to mourn or grieve for my sister, I was left to the mercy of my imagination about the details of her death. There was no prayer for us to say, no service to be held, no outward acknowledgement that we had lost someone we loved. There was only the pain of knowing that she was dead, that she had probably suffered beforehand and that there was nothing I could do. Because it had no venting, the pain of my grief became renewed anger and spiteful determination to stay alive myself and to keep as many of my family alive as I could. I often spoke aloud my resolution to live long enough to plunge a knife into a German heart.

During the second half of August, to keep up their daily quotas for the trains, the Germans invalidated all work permits issued in the past. They had liquidated the Little Ghetto

during the first half of the month. By issuing new work permits after that, they hoped to flush out anyone who had escaped the liquidation, besides rounding up manpower to keep the factories in the Big Ghetto running. With the Little Ghetto emptied out, the troops concentrated on the excess population in the Big Ghetto. People who couldn't obtain new work papers and found no hiding place within the walls would be rounded up in the blockades.

The Germans no longer expected the Jewish police to conduct the blockades. Perhaps they realized that too many bribes were passing hands. Large numbers of S.S. men, along with Ukrainians, Latvians and Lithuanians, began to carry on the blockades. Some of the shops, along with the apartment buildings, were being raided. Sometimes entire streets were sealed off and emptied, building by building. It became a common sight to see hundreds of people trooping down the streets toward the Umschlagplatz, escorted by armed details of soldiers and police. The streets were noticeably less crowded and there were many apartments in our building that were empty now. On August 29, most of the ghetto shops were closed, including the one where I had been working. I didn't know it then, but about 200,000 people had been deported during August.

With the closure of so many of the shops, I assumed that the end was near. I felt like a cornered animal. There was

no more work, where Alice and I were safe during the day. There was no more Kenkarte for me to cling to. Fortunately, the shop where Jerry worked wasn't closed when mine was. Evie had found a job there, too, along with the daughter of our dentist-neighbor, Dr. Greenwald. Their factory was in our building, just across the courtyard from our apartment. It made me feel better to think that they were so close, but I knew that it was dangerous for Alice and me to stay home alone all day.

Our only alternative was to hide while the others were at work. While I knew that, even in the best hiding place, it was just a matter of time, I resolved to keep fighting until the last. There was an apartment on the fourth floor that was vacant, its inhabitants deported. It had a back room, furnished with a bed and a huge mahogany chest, that could be sealed off from the rest of the apartment. The room also had a large window overlooking the courtyard, so that I could see the police coming if there was a blockade of our building.

Each morning, when Jerry and Evie left for work, Alice and I would go upstairs to hide. Once inside the back room, I would push the chest against the closed door, sealing us in. We would stay there all day, waiting for the workers to be let out for the day, or for the dreaded sirens that signalled the blockade. At day's end, Alice and I would go downstairs to

join Jerry and Evie in our own apartment.

One day, the inevitable happened. The sirens came close and, looking out the window in the room, I saw police and soldiers pouring into the courtyard below. The awful routine of the blockade began and the factory across the courtyard began to empty out. The workers were rousted quickly, but this time there was no checking of work papers. Everyone was herded together and directed to start for the Umschlagplatz. Although I realized that I risked being seen by someone below, I stole looks at the scene below, locating Jerry and Evie in the crowd. They were grouped together with the others and told to walk toward the station. I stood helplessly above while they began their walk to death.

The group had barely started moving when one of the Germans escorting them whirled around and faced my husband, who was in the rear of the line. The policeman smashed Jerry on the front of the head with a club and screamed an order: Jerry was to select the two best seamstresses in the group of women being led away. If he didn't select the two best ones, he would be shot.

Stunned by the blow to his head and fearful for his life, Jerry obeyed the command. Evie was standing among those singled out for selection. I held my breath, waiting for Jerry to point her out. But he didn't. Dazed and momentarily unmindful of Evie's presence he selected two other women in the group. The

Germans ordered those two to remain behind along with Jerry to oversee the machinery left in the shop.

From the window, I watched as Evie trooped off with the rest of the workers. My sister was going to the Umschlagplatz and to her death. I knew that I might be caught if I left my hiding place but I had to find a way to get Evie back. When I got downstairs, Jerry was already there, trying to explain what had happened. There was no time for condemnation, just the one thought of getting Evie away from the trains. Jerry ran to Greenwald's apartment, looking for the Jewish policeman who lived with them. He was a good man, one of the few who tried to help those he could. At the Greenwald's there was an hysterical uproar. Their daughter had also been taken in the blockade. Amidst the screaming and crying, the policeman left for the Umschlagplatz to search for the two girls.

A short time later, the policeman returned alone. He had gone directly to the Umschlagplatz to search for Evie and Greenwald's daughter. Sorrowfully, he told us that many of the boxcars were already sealed when he got there and that the girls were not to be found among the confused mob at the station. We listened to his report in silent grief, except for Dr. Greenwald. As soon as he realized that his only child was gone, he dissolved into anguished crying. While the rest of us went numb, his wailing filled the apartment. All that night, Green-

wald's cries echoed throughout the building.

There is no doubt that Evie and Greenwald's daughter died at Treblinka. We never found anyone who saw her after the blockade that day.

I know now that I didn't really feel Evie's death until long after it happened. Our lives then were so filled with the struggle to stay alive, so consumed with terror and pain, that there was no energy left for grieving. That night when we lost Evie, we had only until the next sunrise to get our wits together in order to confront our own struggle with death. There was only time enough to figure out how to avoid the next day's blockade. The pain of grief was there, but there was nothing to do about it. It seemed that we were all dying, even those who were still alive. We were losing parts of ourselves every day. All life, as we had known it, was disappearing.

September 5, 1942 began at two in the morning with a jolt for all of us. There were police in the courtyard of our building yelling German orders: the building would be cleaned out later in the day. All tenants were ordered to appear before the German commission beginning at six at the corner of Mila and Dzika Streets in the ghetto for registration and relocation. We were told to bring a two-day supply of food and drinking utensils. The announcement warned that if the 10 o'clock

search of the building revealed anyone in hiding, they would be shot immediately. The encirclement of the ghetto had begun.

We knew that our fourth floor hiding place was useless. The police would find us and kill us all. The shops were mostly empty but they afforded few places to hide. After weighing our alternatives, my husband and I agreed to go along with the orders and jump at any chance to escape or hide along the way to the station. My main concern was with Alice, who had developed a fever. I had no medicine to give her and there was no time for her to rest. As six o'clock neared, my husband went out to forage for some bread so that we wouldn't starve before we found some way to escape the commission. I dressed myself and my feverish, red-eyed daughter. I had some money hidden in the house, some gold rubles, so I stuck them inside my clothes. Perhaps at the last minute they could be used for a bribe. As I dressed, making sure that my packet of poison was tucked into my brassiere, my mind whirled. Somehow I had to find a way to circumvent appearing before the commission.

I thought of my brother Jacob, still working for the Germans in a shop on Stawki Street. Perhaps if I went to him, he would be able to hide us in or near his shop. It was one way of escaping the orders. I was so intent on my idea, I couldn't wait for my husband to return. For all I knew, he might be caught already. With Alice, I raced into the street.

From the entranceway of our building, I could see that the ghetto was already surrounded by Ukrainian soldiers.

Since it was still well before six, the streets were deserted. As we threaded our way through the ghetto to Stawki Street, my heart raced with hope that Jacob would be able to help us. But when I approached the shop, my hopes collapsed into the pit of my stomach. The entire building that housed the shop was surrounded by armed S.S. There was no possibility of getting past them. Feeling defeated and helpless, I started back home.

My husband had returned when we got back. Neither of us could think of anything to do. Just before six, we took our small supply of bread and some water and started our trek to the Umschlagplatz. There was no place else to go.

In contrast to my venture in the streets earlier that morning, the roads enroute to Mila Street were now filling up with people. In the grayness of dawn we were all making the same journey. There were armed police all along the route. There was no disorder or excessive noise as the crowds moved along, just the sound of shuffling feet and occasional whispers. It was a pathetic sight, that of so many human beings, some carrying children or small bundles with meager supplies, moving silently through familiar streets toward an unknown destiny.

Suddenly I began to feel as though I had lived this expe-

rience before. I began to notice the shops and signs along the way, the condition of the crowd and the silence in a new way. As we moved up Dzika Street toward Mila, the realization seized me that I was reliving exactly what had happened in the dream that I had had many years before. I was instantly sure that the dream had been a warning to prepare me for this moment. Panic rose within me when I recalled that death waited for those who went along with the crowd. I whispered to my husband to watch for an opportunity to escape from the confines of the crowd without calling attention to ourselves. Our heads swiveled from side to side as our eyes searched for a yard, a doorway or an alley where we could hide, even for only a few seconds to gather our wits. There was no time to pray, just to watch, wait our chance and hope.

Our opportunity came as we neared the corner of Dzika and Mila Streets. A house stood on the corner with an entrance facing us. We slowed our pace, then milled around near the door, hoping for someone to enter or exit. It occurred to me that we might be shot, but I told myself that it would be better to be shot than to go to the camps. After a few moments, someone came out of the door. We bolted forward, pushing our way in violently. I expected gunfire to follow us, but it didn't come. Once inside, we raced up the stairs until we reached the top floor. Running down the hall, we looked for

a place to hide. Frantically, we pushed our way into one of the apartments, into the midst of a group of strangers. Oddly enough, as we burst in their door, they offered no resistance or objections. We offered no explanations or apologies. Inside the apartment, the three of us crouched beneath a window for refuge. We learned from the inhabitants that the house was used for workers who were still employed by the Germans outside the ghetto. We decided to stay for as long as we needed to.

We got an occasional glimpse of what was happening on the streets below. The German commission was set up at the corners of Mila and Dzika Streets. The people who passed along the front of them were being sorted according to some procedure we couldn't ascertain from our vantage point. Hours passed as we huddled under that window, listening and stealing peeks at the scene below. We were so tired and numbed by fear, the only thing we considered was staying there as long as we could.

That morning, most of the others left in the building were rounded up for work. They were taken out of the ghetto from an exit near the Umschlagplatz and transported to Block Brune, in Aryan Warsaw. The house was empty.

All the food we had brought with us was gone and there wasn't a scrap of anything in the apartment were were hiding in. We were famished, but I was most worried about Alice. She

still had a fever and it was evident that she had the chicken pox. She needed something to eat.

Late in the day, Jerry decided to go outside to get food for Alice. Taking the route leading to the barbed wire fence, he saw a few people standing near it. The workers had returned from the other side of the wall. The ones who had jobs outside the ghetto were one of the most fortunate groups in the ghetto. They escaped the blockades during the day and were able to get precious food to smuggle back to their families. If they were clever enough at concealing what they had, or could afford to bribe their German escorts, they could have a lucrative business going for themselves. With extra money for more food and for bribes, life was much safer.

As Jerry stood near the fence with the others there was much business going on through the barbed wire. Most of the exchange was barter. People were paying for food with items of clothing rather than money. One of the returning workers had some milk for sale.

Thinking of Alice, my husband considered what he had in his pocket. Before leaving our apartment on Leszno Street, he had put my four-carat engagement ring into his pocket. Since milk was one of the most perishable and rarest items on the ghetto market, the ring would be useful.

I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw Jerry returning

with a glass of milk. It wasn't cold, but it looked clean enough and Alice needed it. My husband confessed how he had paid for it. After so much human loss, separation from material things meant nothing at all. When I heard that my ring had bought the milk, it didn't matter.

A few hours later, the people in the apartment told us what they were hearing from their neighbors in the building. Even the tenants here were told to present themselves before the commission. If they didn't, the Germans said, they would lose their work permits. For anyone, that was the equivalent of the death sentence. We discussed what we should do when the building was evacuated. My husband and I concluded that we would have to take our chances and present ourselves before the commission. Apprehensively, we left our refuge, taking Alice and what was left of our food.

On Mila Street we mingled with the crowd waiting to be reviewed by the commission. It was late in the day by this time and the heat had soaked into every corner of the scene. The people milled around in it, lethargic and empty-eyed. Sitting on curbstones, leaning against walls, everyone there seemed resigned to the inevitable. There were Germans everywhere, surveying us icily. We looked around for a minute and directed our attention toward the activities of the commission. By watching the directions in which the people were sent, we

realized that things were taking on a pattern, a deadly one for us. Most of the people were being directed toward the Umschlagplatz. We watched the few who were released. None of them had children with them. All the couples with children were being sent to the transports.

We looked at each other and at our daughter. Without discussion, we knew that if we remained in the line to go before the commission we would all perish. Again we looked around for possible escape routes, places nearby that we could slip into without drawing attention to ourselves. We looked at the house on the corner where we had found safety before. It had been evacuated and was now empty. Now it was dark, making it easier to slip away from the crowd.

We separated ourselves from the mob at the corner and stole around to the side of the house facing away from the soldiers and the commission. Holding Alice tightly by the hand, we circled around to the side of the courtyard facing Dzika Street. Others had the same thoughts. There were a few people trying to scramble over the barbed wire fence that enclosed the courtyard. My heart pounded in my ears as I determined that, barbed or not, we must get over that fence. I looked around in the dark for something to help ourselves with. There were a few crates nearby, so my husband and I stacked them up for use as a ladder. It was so dark that I was sure

we would be safe if we could just scale the fence. There wasn't time or energy to plan further than that.

Suddenly there was an explosion of gunfire behind us. As I turned my head to see where it was coming from, I saw several of the others who were trying to get over the fence fall down. Gestapo had come around the corner of the house and opened fire on us. As more blasts came, I heard several more bodies hit the ground. I expected to be hit. In an instant I thought, "This is the end. We are going to die." My husband, Alice and I stood frozen against the fence as the Gestapo retreated into the blackness, contented that they had prevented everyone's escape. Numb with fear and shock, we resumed our stacking near the fence like high-speed robots, without a word. When the makeshift staircase was finished, it was time for me to lead the way. The barbed wire bit into the flesh of my hands as I clenched it and struggled upward. So great was my fear that the pain of the wire seemed far away. Finally, I was over the top. My husband pushed my legs over and I tumbled to the ground. He handed Alice over the fence to me, trying to prevent the wire from grazing her skin. He scrambled over last and we dashed for the house.

We ran upstairs and resumed our former place under the window in the top floor apartment. Bloody, terrified and ex-

hausted, we crouched beneath the window for the night.

We had little chance to sleep or recover from our flight. It began to rain during the night and the air became more stifling than ever. There was the sound of gunfire nearby. It crackled through the stillness, making us jump every time it began. Sometime in the night we began to hear the screaming and crying of many children outside the window. In the blackness, we could see nothing but the cries echoed throughout the neighborhood. We wondered what was happening below in the courtyard.

At dawn, we didn't have to wonder any more. As soon as we could we peeked out the hole underneath the window where the tenants used to keep their perishables. The courtyard was a grisly and terrifying sight. All along the borders of the yard and scattered over the ground like battered toys were the bodies of young children, lifeless and wide-eyed in the faintness of the dawn. There were a few children still alive. These ragged, soaking heaps were sitting and standing among the dead. It must have been they who had cried and screamed all night. They were the witnesses, but why they were still alive was a mystery. My glance fell on the center of the horrible tableau. Near the center of the courtyard, a battered truck was parked. The truck was piled high with the limp corpses of infants. There were gray arms and legs askew

everywhere in the back of the truck, as though the small bodies had been thrown hurriedly onto a pile. Some were still alive, whining. As gruesome as it was, I couldn't tear my gaze from that awful scene. I wanted to look away, not to see, but my eyes travelled the entire length and breadth of the yard, taking in everything. I turned to Alice to prevent her from seeing it, but I was too late. She had seen it all, staring in gaping disbelief as I must have stared.

My husband and I looked at each other and agreed without words that our observation about the commission's method of selection had been correct. All couples with children had been sent to the transports, but the children must have been weeded out first and brought here to die. Their bodies would be disposed of like so much garbage. No one would know what had happened to them. I shuddered to think that Alice could have been among them. I have never forgotten that scene in the yard, nor have I ever met anyone else who witnessed it.

After a while Alice turned away from it and began to cry. She asked if we couldn't go down and get one of those children still alive and take him up here with us. I explained to her that we couldn't, that we would be lucky if we could take care of each other as we were. We couldn't protect ourselves, let alone another child. The pieces of what had happened below must have come together in her mind then. She had watched the

commission on Mila Street. She must have realized that the children had had something to do with their parents being selected for the transports. To her, it must have seemed that this whole thing had happened because those people had children. She grew silent and turned her face to me seriously.

"Mama," she said, "Leave me here and go. If I stay with you you and Papa we will die. Maybe if I stay here and you go, at least you will stay alive." Tears of pain and sadness rolled down our faces as I strained to find my voice. I wanted to reassure her. I thought that my heart would break for her as I held her close.

"No, Alice," I murmured, "Whatever happens to one of us happens to us all. If we have to die, then we will all three die together." It was the only answer I could give. My heart ached because I couldn't promise her that we weren't going to die. I wanted to give her hope, but I loved her too much to lie to her.

We laid there by the window for some time, resting and consoling each other, trying to forget the scene we had witnessed below. We must have slept some. Early in the afternoon came the shouting of orders. The Gestapo must have discovered that there were still some people in the building. The house was to be evacuated again. The inhabitants would be shot if they remained behind. It seemed like the end of everything

for us.

The next morning, the Germans ordered the building evacuated again. Inside, there was frantic scrambling as we all tried to devise ways of evading the police. But after a few moments, Jerry and I realized that there was nothing more to be done. We would have to go outside with the workers. Our time had run out.

Outside on the street, we stayed with the group. It was clear that we were all bound for the same place: the Umschlagplatz. The Germans surrounded us and we straggled toward the trains.

At the gate, a German gave orders. The party of workers was to turn and follow him. Instead of going inside the gate, toward the trains, we were lead down Zamenhofa Street away from the Umschlagplatz. I was confused by the German's behavior, but said nothing. A question asked at the wrong time was sometimes answered with a bullet. The others in the group silently followed along. After marching us several blocks along Zamenhofa Street, the German stopped in front of an empty house. When he told us to go inside, the situation became clear. Someone in the group had bribed the German to escape the trains.

I had come vis a vis with the fate of the entire ghetto. It was obvious that the Germans wouldn't give up until the

ghetto was empty. If we stayed, we could certainly die. It was time to get out. I knew now that our only chance to stay alive rested in getting on the other side of the ghetto wall. There was nothing to hold us back now, nothing left of our lives here to save. Our families were mostly gone. Our property was only that - property - and it wasn't ours anymore. Our ties to the only thing that mattered, our loved ones, were broken by death. It was time to get out before it was too late for us. On the other side of Warsaw, there were those who would help us. They were only a phone call away.

I went down into the basement. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw a phone lying on the basement floor. Many of the houses near the edge of the ghetto had been occupied by the smugglers. Because they had money, it was possible for them to pay someone to hook up an illegal phone for them here in the basement, where it wouldn't be seen or heard. This one must have been overlooked by the Germans and the looters. When I picked up the receiver, I realized it was working. With shaking hands, I dialed Mr. Z.'s number, long since memorized. At that moment, calling him on the other side of Warsaw was like calling someone in another universe. The ghetto had become like a crazy little world someplace far removed from the rest of the earth. My heart jumped when I heard my friend's familiar voice answering at the other end.

Since it had been some time since we had had any contact with each other, he asked what had happened and who was still alive in the family. I told him briefly about my mother's and sisters' deaths and about what had happened in the last day. It seemed that I was relating the events of a lifetime to him as I tried to tell him everything as concisely as possible. He encouraged me to get out of the ghetto. He advised me to make my move quickly, giving me suggestions as to who might be the best arranger of my escape. He said that he would wait to hear from me about what I could arrange. He thought it best that I come first with Alice. He told me to come directly to his house once I got out.

I protested that I had no Aryan papers. I knew that it would be impossible to get them now inside the ghetto. If I arrived at his house and the house was searched, the penalty for him and his family for harboring me was death. I told him that I thought the risk too great. Forcefully but calmly, he brushed my protestations aside. He told me that he would take care of the details of papers when I got to his house. All I should think about was getting out from behind the ghetto walls. Then, when I was safe in Aryan Warsaw at his place, we would plan the escape of my husband and brother calmly. Speaking with Mr. Z after the fear and exhaustion of the last day gave me the courage to think beyond the next few minutes. His concern for

us gave me the strength to make plans for more than the next few minutes.

While waiting for our escape plan to materialize, my husband and I decided to try to find work in the ghetto shops again until we could make the connections necessary to get out. There were still a few factories where the Jews who remained in the ghetto worked, making clothes and supplies for the German army. One of these was owned by Walter C. Toebbens, located in several large buildings on Lesno St., where I worked before my mother's death. Both my husband and I got jobs there and the life-saving work papers that were issued. By that time, September of 1942, the papers were no guarantee of immunity from the blockades, but to us, they represented the only chance we had. To find a place to hide wasn't impossible, but a hiding place, in our opinion only postponed the inevitable. Our plan was to get out of the ghetto before the Germans finished emptying it out.

When we started working at the Lesno St. shop, we began to realize that, although our apartment on Franciskanska St. was adequate, it was conspicuous. Officially, most of the building had been "liquidated", its inhabitants put aboard the trains. By remaining there, we might draw unnecessary attention to ourselves at the wrong moment. Also, it wasn't very convenient anymore. It was quite a long walk from our

apartment to Lesno St. each day. We looked for another apartment and were lucky enough to fine one right on Lesno St., a few doors from our factories. It was only one furnished room, but we weren't interested in comfort by that time. All we wanted was a roof over our heads until we could arrange an escape.

The summer faded and it was winter when Alice had another narrow escape. One cold, snowy day, Mrs. Swider, who shared our apartment, offered to keep Alice home with her for the day. She had a daughter a little older than Alice who was sick, so she had to stay home anyway.

That night I returned home as usual, anticipating nothing. When I entered our apartment, the windows were broken and it was very cold. There was no sign of Mrs. Swider, her daughter or Alice. Silently, I began to search for my child. Frustrated by not finding her immediately, I began to call her name. My heart nearly stopped when she climbed, grimy and frightened, from the coal bin. Shaking with relief at seeing me, she recounted the day's events.

There had been a blockade of our building that day. Germans had come storming into the building to flush out those who didn't come downstairs. Frantically, Mrs. Swider and Alice scrambled for a place to hide. They climbed into the large wooden coal box and pulled the lid over them as the Germans

came stomping through the halls. Mrs. Swider left her daughter in bed because it was so cold and she thought that the Germans wouldn't make a fuss over one sick, young girl. She and Alice had squeezed into the coal bin and huddled there, knee to knee in silence. The noise of the Gestapo reached our door and the Germans burst in. Alice and Mrs. Swider heard the crying of her daughter as the men roused her from bed. As the shouting got louder and the child's screams became more pitiful, Alice grasped Mrs. Swider's hands and held tight. As the Germans hauled the girl away, barefoot and nightgowned, into the cold, Alice's nails sank further and further into my neighbor's hands. It was her only way of begging the woman not to betray their hiding place. The two stayed in the coal bin until the blockade was over. Then, shrieking with wild grief, Mrs. Swider had left in search of her daughter. Alice had stayed put in the box until she heard my voice.

I was stung with anguish for my friend and relieved that my child had been spared. What an impossible choice for a mother to have to make! If she had jumped out to save her own child, all three of them would have been lost. Because she had restrained herself, she and my child were saved, but her daughter had been dragged off. Mrs. Swider was unsuccessful in her attempt to locate her daughter. The girl had most likely either been shot en route to the Umschlagplatz or she

had been put on the death trains.

I was so upset over the incident that I resolved not to go to work anymore, but I soon realized that that was impossible. I would have to work and keep up my Kenkarte if Alice and I were to leave the ghetto as planned. Besides, we needed every penny we could get to insure our escape. So the next morning Alice and I went to the shop. I was determined that Alice would not get out of my sight.

Chapter VI

It was soon after that that Walter C. Toebbens himself paid a visit to the miserable little shop on Lesno St. One morning he strolled into the shop, looking like a price. To us, who were so poor and desperate, his finely tailored suit and cologne, his well-manicured hands and his warm and elegant overcoat were a wonder as well as a cause of resentment. We all stared at his finery and thought of our hopeless situations and hated him for being what he was, an accomplice to the Germans. He spoke to us in a condescending tone. He had learned that some of the women who were left in the shops were bringing their children to work with them. This couldn't continue, he said, since it was a hindrance to business. It wasn't right that the children should be in the shops. So he had taken it upon himself, in his benevolence (the monster!) to make other provisions for them. As he spoke I was reminded

of one of the ancient Latin proverbs I had learned many years before. Time Danaos et dona ferentes it said, which means I am afraid of the enemy even though he brings gifts. He told us that from then on that we were forbidden to bring our children to work with us and that other facilities were available to care for the children during the day, at no charge of course. There was a playyard set up at 42 Lesno St. to care for the children while we worked. We were to take our little ones there immediately, we would be given time off to do so. Then he warned us that if any child was found in the shop thereafter, he would be shot immediately. I grew fearful, but I was determined not to show it and to try to think fast enough to outsmart Toebbens. I knew that, coming from him there must be some evil intent behind this seemingly kind offer. So I resolved to watch and wait. All of us with children began to file out of the building after Toebbens left, heading down the street toward 42 Lesno. I stopped to talk to my husband at his shop and he agreed that, for the time being, we would have to comply with the orders. So I took Alice toward the playground.

As we came down the street, I grew more and more apprehensive about this "favor" from Toebbens. The picture of the children in the courtyard on that horrible night in August returned to my mind and I remembered their pitiful cries.

Suddenly I heard someone calling me from one of the shops. I turned and saw an old school friend, Franca Giberstajn, waving to me from the window next door to the new nursery. She questioned me about my preoccupied look and I explained my anxiety about leaving Alice in the care of someone else, far enough away that I wouldn't know what was happening to her. She commiserated and then tried to reassure me. She would watch out for the child, she said, and if anything happened she would go get her and take her in the shop with her. Gratefully, I tried to reassure Alice and went back to work with a troubled mind.

Later on that afternoon my worst suspicions were confirmed. As we were working, someone rushed into the shop and told us that there was a blockade going on farther up Lesno St. My thoughts flew to Alice and I ran out with the other mothers toward the nursery. My husband must have heard the news too because he soon was running up Lesno Street beside me. As we neared the nursery, we heard a few shots and then it was quiet. We couldn't see anything because the playyard of the place was walled in. As we drew near the wall we could hear screaming and crying. Looking inside the gate we saw the reason for the noise. Scattered everywhere in the yard were the bodies of children, obviously mowed down with machine gun fire. They lay everywhere on the grass and in the bushes, where they had

tried to hide.

Upon hearing the news about the incident, parents of the children had run from everywhere in the ghetto, just as my husband and I had. Screaming at the horrible sight in the garden of the nursery, the parents were searching sorrowfully for the bodies of their children, just as my husband and I began to do. As we moved among the grieving others in the yard, I reproached myself again for letting Alice out of my sight. As we groped frantically among the bushes for our daughter's body, I again heard someone calling my name outside the wall of the garden. It was my friend, Franca, beckoning to us from the side window of her shop. We rushed over to find that she had kept her promise to us. She had, when the shooting began, called to Alice, taken her in through the window and hidden her in the shop. For the second time in a very short period, our daughter had been spared. We gave our thanks to my friend for saving Alice from certain death and went back to work, determined more than ever to escape from the ghetto as soon as possible. Regretfully, my friend Franca Gilberstajn must have perished in the terrible months after, for I never saw her again.

After returning home from the "nursery", my husband and I decided that it wasn't wise for me to work at Toebbens' any longer. First of all, there was no chance for me to hide

Alice there after what had happened that day. No matter where I tried to conceal her at the shop, she would eventually be discovered. The shop foreman would no longer overlook her presence, as he had in the past. Also, I knew from the reaction of the other parents that day that, in their grief, they resented me and my child for having survived when their children had perished. I had seen the grieved anger in their faces and heard the muted suspicion in their voices when they asked me how my daughter had escaped the slaughter. I was afraid that, out of jealousy that my child had survived while theirs had died, they would report Alice's presence to the shop foreman. Besides, it was becoming urgent that our plans for escape from the ghetto be actualized as soon as possible. To accomplish that, I would have to be at the disposal of the Jewish policeman whom we had bribed. He had warned us that he couldn't tell us exactly what day would be the best for my exit until the work party arrived at the gate leading out of the ghetto. I would have to go along with the workers several times and wait my chance.

As it happened, I went out with the workers once over to Belwederska St. before I took Alice with me for the final attempt. Early each morning members of the work party gathered near the gate at the end of Lesno St. to be transported to their jobs. I would go there with them and mingle in with

the group. When it came time, each of us had to show our work permits. Then as we passed through the exit gate each of us was searched. We boarded a truck standing on the other side of the gate and were driven to a stop on Belwederska St. to Block Brun where the workers dispersed to their jobs. At the end of the day, they regrouped at the drop-off spot, heads were counted, papers were checked again, body searches were conducted again. Then everyone boarded the truck and returned to the ghetto through the Lesno St. gate as before.

By the third or fourth trip out, the routine was not so intimidating to me and I began to have a faint hope that my plan for survival would succeed. My only worry was the risk that Alice and I would present to Zenon. I had work papers, but they were in my own name, Francesca Pinczewska Sladkowska. I was marked as a Jew. I worried that, if I was stopped near Zenon's or if the Gestapo came to his home, that I would be the cause of his death as well as the death of his wife and children. My documents would be a liability in Aryan Warsaw and I didn't have either the connections or the money to obtain Aryan papers inside the ghetto. So, on one of my last practice runs with the workers, I waited until the others had left, checked to see that I wasn't followed, then went to a shop near the drop-off spot to use the phone.

When he answered, I told Zenon that I had made the trip

safely and that my plans for leaving the ghetto were complete. Then I told him about my worries for him and his family. I asked if he had fully weighed the risk he was taking for helping me. I explained again that I had no work papers except my own and was worried about the consequences for us all if I had to present them outside the ghetto. Again my loyal friend brushed aside my warnings about the risk he was taking. He insisted that I go home, get my daughter ready and get out of the ghetto as soon as possible. He told me to leave the problem of papers to him. What was most important, he said was to get out alive and get to his house. Then, he assured me, he could get some documents for me and we could plan the escape of my husband and brother together with clear minds. Once more, the unquestioning loyalty of my friend and his unconditional support gave me courage and confidence. I returned to the ghetto with a lighter heart and a small hope that whoever was left of my dear ones had a chance for survival.

That night I reviewed my conversation with Zenon with my husband. We were in complete agreement about all our plans for escape. Alice and I would go first, then he and my brother would make their attempts later. We decided that the next time we got work from our connection in the Jewish police would be our final try. Either Alice and I would make it to Zenon or we would die in the attempt. Both of us knew that

in the ghetto none of us had any chance at all, that it was just a matter of time until the Germans eradicated the population completely. As parents, we both decided that, despite our fears about trying to survive outside the ghetto, we must not risk our child's life by staying.

So, on the morning of November 27, 1942 Alice and I rose early and dressed as warmly as we could. I still had my one winter coat, but it was little protection against the biting cold as we walked down Lesno St. toward the gate. We mingled with the work party and waited our turn to have papers inspected and be searched. I had deliberately put a few pieces of lingerie in my pockets for the policemen at the gate to find. I thought that it would distract them enough from looking at us so that we could pass. It worked. Soon it was time to pass through the gate of the ghetto for the last time. The Jewish policeman had taken Alice ahead of me toward the gate. Then, he told me I could come out with the rest of the adults in the work party. I trembled at the thought of Alice and I being separated, even momentarily. I had an instantaneous fear that perhaps there might be a mix-up or even treachery and that the thing I feared most, Alice being taken away from me to some unknown destiny, would actually happen. But I had no choice. To have asked questions of the Jewish policeman or argue with him at that moment might have

drawn attention to us and spoiled our chances forever. So I just hung on to my hopes and watched as the policeman handed over my daughter at the gate. Then I watched as a Gestapo, probably the one that the policeman had bribed, took her by the hand and led her to the truck. I never thought that I would reach that truck, but moments later, I was sitting alongside Alice and the first half of our perilous passage was over. I realized that, because of my anxiety over my daughter, I had had no time to reflect that I was walking through the gate for the last time. My mind was so alert to what was going on at the moment that I had had no time to think about the fact that I was not going to go back there ever again.

I had no time to reflect on that in the truck, either, except to remark that nothing terrible had happened, so far. My mind was already racing toward what lay ahead. Although we were out of the ghetto, we were far from being safe. Alice and I would soon be outside the ghetto with no Aryan papers. If we should be stopped, it would mean the end of us. So as we approached the drop-off spot on Belwederska St. my mind was alert to everything that was happening around us. We got off the truck, but milled around as the rest of the workers dispersed. After they were gone, I made sure that no one was watching us. Then Alice and I walked down one of

the streets nearby and I began to look for a cab. One came along and Alice and I got in. We probably looked no different than hundreds of other people that were passing by, but my mind was alert just the same. To cover myself and to protect Zenon, I gave the driver an address on the same street as my friend's, but with a different number.

Perhaps because of the poorness of our clothing or maybe because the war had made his life difficult, he quoted me an outlandish price for the ride. I knew enough not to argue with him and draw the attention of passersby. Instead, in my haughtiest tone, I reminded him that I had not asked what the price was. I had a sick child, I said, and I was taking her to a doctor no matter what the cost. That seemed to satisfy him and soon we were let out at the address I had given. I watched nervously until the cab was out of sight before Alice and I walked to Zenon's. As we neared his apartment, I felt again a brief pang of disbelief. It was hard for me to get used to the idea that we had actually escaped alive from the ghetto. We had passed all the checkpoints and the nighmare of discovery had not descended upon us. We had travelled across Warsaw and had not been caught. We were near Zenon's door and no one had stopped us.

It was dinnertime when Zenon opened his door to us, beaming with joy. His wife and children gathered around to

greet us with embraces and tears of happiness and welcome. They fussed over us and made us comfortable as dinner was prepared. For Alice and I, who had been starving for so many months, just the aroma from the dinner was a grand experience. It had been so long since I had had anything suitable to cook that I had forgotten how pleasant the smell of something cooking was. For Alice, who had been surviving on scraps of food for three years, and who had been so young when the deprivation had begun, this must have been a new experience entirely. Our friends had spared nothing to prepare a welcome feast that, to us was nothing short of a banquet. Obviously, they had been preparing for our arrival for some time, gathering, even during the rationing of the war, all sorts of good food. As we all sat down to eat, I was overwhelmed by the goodness of this simple family. They had risked their lives by inviting us to their home for refuge and they had done it gladly. As if that wasn't enough, they had received us in celebration. During the meal, I couldn't help remarking to myself that it was a strange feeling to be able to eat until I was full, and I voiced my appreciation of the food many times. But my daughter said nothing. She just gazed in awe at all the food and ate continuously.

After supper Zenon spoke to me about his plans for us. We were to stay overnight with him, but no longer. Since

he was known as a member of the underground, it was too great a risk for us to stay longer than that. Strangers at his apartment would immediately arouse the suspicion of his neighbors or the Gestapo might come around, as they did periodically. We would stay the night in the building's laundry room, he explained, and then be off to his mother-in-law's the next day. She owned her own small home and a nursery and had room for us and was willing to help as long as she could. I brought up the subject again of my papers and Zenon again assured me that he would find a way for me to obtain Aryan documents through his connection. I never asked him the details of his connections because I knew that he could never tell me. He also assured me that he would begin to make plans for my husband's and brother's escape and help me find a place to hide them. I felt very safe when Zenon took us upstairs to the laundry room and tried to make us comfortable on the large table there for the night. The room was cold when we started to settle down, but my friend assured us that we would soon be warm. He must have bribed the janitor of the building that night to put some extra coal in the furnace, for Alice and I were warm enough all night.

Chapter VII

The next morning Mrs. Schmidt came for us as scheduled. She must have known something about our problems, but she asked few questions that morning and made Alice and I feel most welcome, as if she had invited us to her home for a little holiday. At her cozy, plain little house, Alice and I shared a bedroom with her, and another son, not yet married, had another room. The other son was never told, I assumed, who we really were. Mrs. Schmidt explained our prolonged stay with her by telling him and her neighbors that we were friends from the country who were visiting. So our time there was very pleasant, compared with what Alice and I had been used to. Mrs. Schmidt was a warm, obliging hostess.

Like most Polish women of her generation, she was deeply religious and in the room we shared was the spot devoted to her religious expression. At one end of the long, narrow

bedroom hung a beautiful portrait of the Madonna. Each day, Mrs. Schmidt placed fresh flowers on the little shelf under the painting and she assured us that she prayed for us daily. The goodness and devotion of our hostess made an especially deep impression on Alice. After the brutality, starvation and loss she had survived, it was a new and pleasant experience to live in a home where she had enough to eat and heard no gunfire or terrified screaming; she was warm and comfortable at night and was obviously accepted by the people around her. She knew that she must hide who and what she really was, but she faced no daily threats to her life. Also, Mrs. Schmidt's devotion to her religion seemed to give the child a measure of comfort and security. Night after night now, she was falling asleep under the compassionate eyes of the Madonna staring at her from the portrait facing the bed.

One morning, it became obvious to me how strong the impression made by Mrs. Schmidt's fervor really was. I got up early with Mrs. Schmidt, leaving Alice still asleep. After washing, I returned to the bedroom to find that Alice had awakened. Hadn't I seen or heard the nice lady who had been talking to her, she asked. The lady had been beautiful, she said, and had assured her that she was caring for Alice and me. I asked Mrs. Schmidt if she had been in the room, but she hadn't. I was convinced that Alice, somewhere between sleep

and waking, had dreamed her encounter with the lady. But Mrs. Schmidt had a different interpretation of the "vision". Nothing would happen to us, she assured me, because we were under the Madonna's protection. We would be safe. Although I didn't have the simple faith of Mrs. Schmidt, I felt that I would not question Alice's dream further because the explanation that Mrs. Schmidt gave seemed to comfort her. To see my child feel secure, even for a short time, meant so much in contrast to what she had suffered in the past few years, that it didn't matter from what religious source the comfort came.

During our stay at his mother-in-law's, I was in constant contact with Zenon. He kept me informed about his plans for my husband and brother and about his progress in getting me Aryan papers. He knew that I was in need of a source of income, but that I had to have Aryan documents to work outside the ghetto.

Mrs. Schmidt had two sons: the one who lived at home with us and another who was married and lived in Radom. One time, when Mrs. Schmidt's daughter-in-law came to visit, I decided to try to find out, through her if I could, what had happened to my brother, Maurice, and his family who also lived in Radom. We had not heard a word about him since the occupation began. Cautiously, I approached the daughter-in-law,

who didn't know anything about us or our reason for staying with her husband's mother. I asked her if she knew anyone by the name of Maurice Pinczewski, who was from Radom. I explained that I had lent him some money before the war and hoped to recover it by contacting him. In my curiousity I used the wrong story about my reasons for wanting to know his whereabouts. The daughter-in-law assured me that she would find the person for me and threaten to report him to the authorities if he didn't repay his debt. Hastily, I assured her that she shouldn't do that. I explained that he was a friend of mine, a very fine person, and that I had no desire to pressure him for the money.

A few weeks later, the woman returned to Mrs. Schmidt's for another visit. She had news for me concerning my "friend". Maurice Pinczewski was still alive, she said, working in a furniture factory in Radom. But the rest of his family hadn't fared so well. His wife had been taken to Treblinka in a blockade and his fourteen-year-old daughter had been shot down in the street. I concealed my shock and grief for the rest of the woman's visit. But later, when I was alone with Alice, I thought about my sister-in-law and her beautiful daughter, both dead. The girl had been gorgeous, possessing even at her young age the kind of face that people stopped on the street to gaze at. It was horrible to picture her dying in

such an ignominious way. Hearing about them both brought back all the pain of my mother and sisters' deaths once more. I began to realize that I hadn't left the pain of loss behind in the ghetto. Even at Mrs. Schmidt's, it still smarted and stung me.

The winter wore on and it was nearly Christmas when Zenon told me that he had found another place for Alice and me. It wasn't safe for us to stay too long in one location because our prolonged presence might arouse the suspicion of Mrs. Schmidt's neighbors, even though I seldom left the house. So, on December 24, 1942, I left Mrs. Schmidt's and went to stay with the Car family, who lived in a military compound near the outskirts of Warsaw.

It must have been sometime shortly before our change of housing that Zenon told me that at the Car's I would be introduced as Helena Kowalska. He said that he was having papers prepared for me so that I could work, but that for the time being, I could use that name.

Alice and I went to the Car's on Christmas Eve, buoyed by the fact that we would be safe there and that Jacob and my husband would soon be out of the ghetto. I had prepared carefully for the stay at Car's, even though they were Zenon's cousins and most willing to accept us. I armed myself with all the details necessary for the Christian celebration of the

holidays, so that Alice and I would not be obviously different in the community. I was introduced to the Car's as Helena Kowalska as planned, and although they knew that Alice and I were Jewish, they, like Mrs. Schmidt, never knew our real names. This was as much a protection for them as it was for us. If questioned by their neighbors, or even by the Gestapo, they would not reveal things that would hurt anyone. They would not have to lie for us. Alice and I joined in the Christmas festivities and I accompanied the family to midnight Mass on Christmas.

All during the week between Christmas and New Year's Day, my brother and I finalized the plans for his escape. He had bribed a German to allow him to leave the ghetto aboard one of the few wood carts that brought supplies in and out each day. He would lie in the back of the wagon, be covered with canvas and ride to the wagon's final stop outside the walls. Then, he would wait his chance, slip away and meet me at the spot on Mokotowska St. I called him several times that week and we spoke briefly, hoping that my calls would not be noticed. But, of course, they were.

One morning, I called and asked for him and a German voice demanded to know who I was and where I was calling from. I hung up immediately and didn't try to call again. For the rest of the week I just waited and hoped for the best.

Chapter VIII

On May 1, 1943, I needed some money, since it was time to pay the Car's and Anna Swerkowska in Anin. I had gone to Zenon the day before and asked him to exchange some of the money that I had from the sale of some of my things into dollars. I picked up the dollars from Zenon about noon on the first and went back to the Car's. About two o'clock or so the doorbell rang and two men, Polish and about thirty, entered the house. They told us that they were from the housing authority and they they wished to see the register of the building. After examining the register, they said that they knew my name and asked why it was not there. Naturally, I couldn't answer and I began to sense that Alice and I were in danger. I also began to fear for the Car's. The two men continued to harass the family about my presence and that of Pavel. They said that they had observed both of us for a long time and that they had suspicions about us. Finally, they made a remark to me about my going to the Jewish cemetery, where I belonged.

I had no idea what these two savages were going to do to us. Alice was outside in the yard playing and for the moment, I was glad that she hadn't been seen or heard by the two Poles. While the two men were threatening and questioning the Car's, I had a chance to slip away and take care of the money I had just received from Zenon that morning. I had tucked it under a mattress for safekeeping until I could make the payments I had gotten it for. Now I didn't know what to do with it to keep it away from these Polish beasts who had barged into the house. One of the Car's neighbors was in the house during the incident, so I got him aside and handed the money to him. I was convinced that the two men would take me, and possibly Alice, away when they left, so I told the neighbor to give the money to the Car's. If necessary, I instructed him, the cash was to be used to help the Car's if they were carted away, too. The man was frightened and didn't seem to understand what was going on, but he took the stack of bills and put them in his pocket, agreeing to do as I said. Then he was able to leave the house, convincing the two men that he was just a neighbor, an innocent bystander.

Arrogant and threatening, the two men ordered all of us, the Car's and me, into the cellar of the building. I thought of Alice playing outside and hoped that she would not come in while the two men were upstairs. They ransacked the apartment and began loading my few possessions into a carriage standing out front of the building. As they loaded my things aboard the carriage, I saw Alice from one of the cellar windows.

She came near enough so that I could speak to her without shouting. I told her to hide quickly. Ingenious little soul that she had become, she asked no questions and found herself a place instantly. There was a pile of leaves and grass on the lawn, raked into a haphazard pile. Like a little chipmunk, she burrowed into the pile, covered herself carefully and never moved. After taking everything that suited them, the two Poles left, threatening to send the Gestapo in their wake.

Those of us trapped in the cellar were determined not to be there when, or if, the Gestapo arrived. We tried the doors and when that proved fruitless, we began to make loud noises, hoping to arouse one of our fellow tenants to set us free. I ran to the window where I had seen Alice, opened it and called to her to crawl in by us. At least she would be with me, I thought, if the Germans arrived. Finally, after much noise and shouting, the same neighbor who had been at the Car's apartment when the Polish brutes arrived, came to let us out of the cellar. Amidst the confusion, I asked him what he had done to safeguard the cash that I had given him. I cried as he told me what he had done. Not wanting to be responsible for so much money, given to him by a stranger, he said that he had looked around for some place to leave it behind. Seeing a robe of mine hanging on the back of the bedroom door, he had tucked the money quietly into the pocket. As we made our way upstairs to the apartment, I ran ahead ~~to~~

for the robe. The money was all I had left. Everything else, my clothes, suitcases, the few possessions I had managed to gather since leaving the ghetto with viturally nothing, were gone. I ran to the door where the robe had been hanging. It was gone, too. The Polish robbers had overlooked nothing.

From a short distance away came the dreaded and familiar sound of the Gestapo sirens. I looked at Alice, standing beside me, waiting for me to tell her what to do. Her bewildered face was dirty and her hair was full of leaves from her hiding place in the yard. Mrs. Car started to undress her to wash her up when the sirens came closer. I knew there would not be time to escape if Alice stopped to wash. The sirens were already on our street when I began to dress Alice in her coat and kerchief, then dressed myself. The poor child would have to go with me as she was, without socks or underwear. The Gestapo had pulled up in front of the Car's house. I prayed for a safe way to avoid them.

Just then Pavel ran out and darted away from the building. The Gestapo went after him, shooting as they pursued him. They wounded him in the leg and he fell. They ran to capture their prey and to put him into the wagon. Alice and I walked calmly toward the gate of the building. Two Germans had remained there, waiting for the others to bring Pavel to be taken away. As Alice came near the gate, they held it open for us and we melted away into the group of people who had gathered around the front fence. I watched as the Gestapo went into the building. The Cars led by the Gestapo, came out of the

building. If they saw me, they gave no sign. I watched as they took the wounded Pavel into custody and wondered what would happen to him and the Cars. Seeing that I had come from the building, a few people turned to me and asked what had happened, but I only shrugged and said that I didn't know. Gradually, I moved to the outermost edge of the crowd. Then when Alice and I were on the outside of it, we walked slowly away. My mind whirled as I struggled to think of a safe place to go to.

I was both awed and frightened at what had happened. The two Polish men, I reasoned probably were not from the housing bureau at all. They were most likely one of the thousand of Polish who made it their business to track down and report Jews for the reward of five dollars or so, as the Germans paid for such information. They had used the results of their surveillance of Pavel and me to the best advantage. They robbed us first and then reported us to the Gestapo. They had made a good haul that day. As I walked along with Alice by the hand, I realized that I had nothing, no clothes for us, no money, no place to go. It was dark and soon the curfew would be in effect, making it dangerous to be on the streets. Unconsciously, I found that I was walking toward the tramway. As Alice and I climbed aboard a car, I thought of a man I knew, named Schwerin, who worked for my friend Weigle and lived on 129 Marsea Konska Street. Maybe he would be able to help us hide, at least for the night. I took the

tramway to the stop nearest his house.

When Schwerin and his wife saw Alice and me, expecially Alice's dishelved condition, they were clearly afraid, but they offered to help immediately. They asked us inside their apartment, and Mrs. Schwerin ran to get some clean socks and underwear for Alice. While she cleaned up Alice and dressed her, I told Mr. Schwerin what had happened at the Car's that day. Eager to help, he offered to let us stay at his place overnight. Then he would give us the address of a relative of his, Stanislaw Florian, who could help us further. Florian was in the underground, he explained, so he would have the connections and the means to help us longer than one night. They had a housekeeper, he said, who would arrive early the next morning. She had been with them a while, he said, but he added that he didn't trust her in the least. If she saw Alice and me, she might report us, and the Schwerins to the Gestapo. I agreed that the risk was too much for the Florian's. It bothered me to have to rely on the resources of others, but in the present circumstances, I knew that I had no choice. Trusting Schwerin, I put myself and Alice completely in his hands. The next morning, Alice and I departed the Schwerin's very early and headed for the Florian's on Mokotowska Street.

The Florians lived in a comfortable apartment and were most eager to help Alice and me, but they explained that it would be impossible for us to stay with them on a steady basis, since Florian was a known member of the underground. He

suggested that I obtain a room in a boarding house most of the time and change my location often. He said that he would find a safe place for Alice to stay. I couldn't understand why Alice and I must be separated, but Florian insisted. I was terrified by the thoughts of leaving the child with someone and not watching her constantly because of the many near-fatal incidents in the past. Although I explained all this to Florian, he insisted that I leave her in his care and get a room for myself. Finally, I got to go along with his plan, although I disagreed that it was best for all of us. That night, I did as Florian directed and found a place in a boarding house. Alice was sent the next morning to stay with Florian's mother-in-law, who lived on Senatorska Street in Pasaz Simonsa.

The next morning, May 2nd, I moved to another boarding house and called Florian to see how Alice was. I was most uneasy about the location of his mother-in-law's house. The section where she lived was near the border of the ghetto, where many Jews tried to escape. Many greedy Polish Aryans gathered around that district, hoping to catch Jews fleeing and report them to the Gestapo. Although Florian wasn't troubled by that, he was afraid that Alice would be questioned by the visitors to his mother-in-law's home. Inadvertently, she might make some small error or say something that might make a visitor suspect that she was from the ghetto. He would try, he said, to find some other place for her. Then

he told me that he was also trying to find some Aryan work papers for me.

The next day I went to the Florian's house, hoping to get some news of Alice and some hope for the papers he had promised. My money was nearly exhausted and I needed to be able to pay my own way, as well as to provide for Alice, my husband and brother. Losing all my cash to the two Polish robbers had put me in dire financial straits. What I needed most was the papers so that I could work and preserve what was left of my independence. I hated the thought of being a burden to the many kind and brave people who had helped me. It depressed me to think of being entirely dependent upon them, burdening them with my every need. Somehow, I thought, I must prevent that.

My depression deepened when I got to Florian's. Alice had been moved, he told me, to a safer place. He had found a family to care for her, but they did not want me to know where they lived, for fear I would try to visit her there.

Chapter IX

A few days after I obtained the long-awaited papers, I called Florian to check on Alice. I was alarmed when he told me that Alice had taken ill. The family that she was staying with had told him that she had a bad cold and a temperature and that she was very weak from it. It had been hard enough being separated from my daughter while I knew that she was well, but now that she was sick, it was impossible for me to keep away from her. I told Florian that, as her mother, I demanded that he give me the address where she was and arrange for me to see her immediately. Seeing that I was not persuaded otherwise this time, he acquiesced. He gave me an address on Czerniakow Street and told me that the woman who was caring for Alice would wait outside the house for me.

After a cursory greeting from the woman, I entered the house and was shocked by the shabbiness and dirt that was everywhere. Worst of all, was the condition of my daughter.

She was lying on a shabby couch in the basement room, pale and obviously delirious from the fever. When she saw me, all that she could manage to say was "Mommy". I was furious at the sight of her, furious at all concerned. Obviously the woman caring for her should have called long before the child's condition deteriorated this far. I was angry at her poor judgment and lack of concern for Alice. I was angry at Florian for putting my daughter amidst such conditions. There were dirty pots and pans everywhere; flies all about. In the child's hand was a branch to keep the flies away. Also, I was angry at my own helplessness in the situation. Not anticipating things being this bad, I had brought no medicine with me. Frantically I asked for the address of a pharmacy nearby, ran to it and brought back something for Alice's fever. As I waited for the medicine to work, Alice's breathing became more labored, and I feared that pneumonia might be setting in. Meanwhile, the woman who had been caring for Alice was becoming irritated at the length of my stay.

Seeing that the child's breathing was not getting easier, I made up my mind that she had to have medical attention, no matter what the risk. I went to a nearby phone and called Dr. Stankiewicz, who had been Alice's pediatrician before the war. He was a professor of medicine at the University of Warsaw and had his own children's hospital, too. Dr. Stankiewicz had seen Alice and I many times in our previous

visits to his office, when Alice was his regular patient. If he knew that we were Jewish, he made no mention of it then. I hoped that it would not be of importance to him now, but I could not be sure since it had been a couple of years since Alice had seen him. I had assumed and asked if he could come to the address on Czerniakow to see Alice. Of course, the doctor agreed to see Alice at the address I gave him, but he said that, because of his heavy schedule of calls and the late curfew, he might not be able to come right away. We might even have to wait until the next morning.

As I returned to Czerniakow Street, I anticipated the difficulty I would have convincing the woman who had cared for Alice that I had to stay the night. My assessment of her attitude was correct. She said that she would keep the child, but that I couldn't stay. I argued and pleaded until I succeeded in changing her mind. I tried to keep Alice as comfortable as possible during the night, but I knew that she was getting worse. In the morning, the doctor arrived. If he recognized either Alice or me, he said nothing about it as he examined the child carefully and thoroughly. Finally, he turned to me, taking in the conditions around. She had pneumonia, he said, and needed the prescription he was writing. After writing the prescription and looking around once more, he changed his mind. Alice would die if she stayed there, he said. It would be better if I could get her to his hospital. At the mention of the word, I

was terrified, fearful of all the questions that would be asked and all the close observations that could be made at a hospital. But, the way I saw it, I had no choice at all. I could not let my daughter worsen and die in this squalid house among people who didn't want us there. No matter what the risk at the hospital, she must go. Together Dr. Stankiewicz and I prepared Alice to go outside for the ride in the doctor's carriage. We bundled her up, even though it was June, because her fever was high.

At the hospital the doctor gave the orders for her admittance and the nurses asked him no questions. Soon, he turned to me and said that Alice was nearing the crisis of her illness and that, if she lived the night, she would get better. I asked to stay with her, but the nurses disagreed. Then the doctor told the Sister on duty that the child needed wine for her heart and fever. Sadly, the nun replied that they had no more wine in the hospital for the patients. Disregarding the rules against using the altar wines for any purpose other than Communion, Dr. Stankiewicz told the nun to go into the sacristy and get some wine. Minutes later, the nun returned with a glass of altar wine, unconsecrated, for Alice. I then went home to Dluga Street.

As the doctor had predicted, that night was a turning point for Alice. The medication was effective and toward morning, it was obvious to me that she was feeling better, although she was very weak. When the doctor came, he confirmed my observation and told me that Alice would recover,

although it would take her about two weeks in the hospital. I knew that she would have to recuperate there. Gratefully, I thanked Stankiewicz for his care and went to Dluga Street.

Florian had good news for me when I arrived at his house. He had found me a place to stay, for the time being, at least. If I was to get a job, I would need a permanent place to live, so that I could settle down and have Alice with me. None of us knew how permanent anything was in those awful times, but I needed better arrangements if I was to work. Moving from place to place and coming to work from a different place each day would eventually come to someone's attention and be regarded as suspicious. Besides, it was impossible to move around like that with Alice in tow. It would be safer, we both agreed, for me to take the room he had heard about through his connections as building manager. There was a family on Dluga Street who had a room in their apartment to rent out. This was common in those times, because so much of Warsaw was destroyed during the bombings that housing had become a serious problem all over the city. Many families who had the room to spare, added to their meager incomes this way.

So, in the middle of August, while Alice was still in the hospital, Florian took me to 13 Dluga Street and introduced me to the Szymanska family as Zofia Woloszczuk. From the beginning, I knew that the landlady, Janina, and I could become as friendly as the circumstances would allow.

She was a woman a little older than me, kind and extroverted, which fitted her profession of midwife. From the beginning she knew that I was Jewish, but she never knew my real name. There were two of us in the rented room in her house, myself and another Jewish girl, younger than me, whose family was confined in the "work camp" at Poniatowa. I felt secure with my roommate and with the Szymanskas, even though the family had many relatives who visited often. Even the location of the house bothered me a little less when I got to know the Szymanskas.

The small building on 13 Dluga Street was in a terrible spot. Directly across from the building was the Plaza Krasinski, an open square with sidewalks and gardens. But beyond the garden, seen clearly from 13 Dluga Street, stood the awful sentinel of the ghetto wall. Each day, Jews who were still left inside the ghetto tried to escape. The wall stood like a massive, gray warning to my roommate and me. We could see the rate of the Jews who failed in their attempts to get safely over the wall. Many nights we were awakened by the screams of those who had been caught alive and were being dragged off by the Polish police. There many times, too when we heard the shots signaling the fate of those who would not be taken alive. Each time the escape of some desparate soul came to its end, I thought of my own exit from behind the ghetto walls, now so far behind me. Compared to the misery and murder of these ill-fated escapees, my exit had been easy and practically painless, I thought.

As if the firm spectacles across the Plaza Krasinski weren't enough, the apartment on Dluga Street had another onerous factor in its location. It was situated in the same building as the headquarters of the Polish police. Countless times the scenarios of torture begun just outside the ghetto wall would continue loudly in our building. After dragging their prey across the square, the police then took them downstairs in our building, where they tortured and beat their prisoners before handing them over to the Gestapo. I couldn't guess how many Jews passed through the headquarters on Dluga Street, screaming and shouting in pain, before they met their deaths with the Gestapo. Although my roommate and I heard shooting and the agonized cries for many nights, each time I heard it was like the first time. I never could forget that, except for some miracle that I did not yet understand, those cries of agony could be mine.

While Alice was in the hospital, I stayed with her there as much as possible, returning to Dluga Street each night. With the little money I had left, I bought some additional food for her each day to supplement her hospital diet so that she would get her strength back. Sometimes, if she could, Janina would give me whatever she had to spare to add to my little purchases. Knowing about Alice's sickness and seeing my struggles, she was eager to give whatever she could to ease my anxiety. She knew that when Alice was released, I would be bringing her to live with me and she

was glad. The idea of having a child around didn't disturb her at all.

In late July, 1943, while looking in the newspaper for a job, I found an advertisement for seamstresses being offered on Ploc ka Street. The factory was taken, the ad said, by Walter C. Toebbens, who had owned the shops inside the ghetto where my husband I had worked. The thoughts of working for such a repulsive creature sickened me, but since jobs were so scarce, and I had a little experience operating a sewing machine, I decided to try. To my surprise, I wasn't questioned much about myself when I went there, and I was hired. Despite my hatred for Toebbens and his kind, I thought it ironic that he, who had been responsible, at least indirectly, for the deaths of so many Jewish children, should have me as an employee. Through my salary from him, I thought spitefully, I would keep the remains of my family alive a while longer.

The conditions at the factory on Ploc ka Street were appalling to me, even though I was desperate for work. As in most factories everywhere, most of the other employees were from the lower classes, uneducated, unethical and uncouth. They came to work each day and were virtual prisoners at the factory. In the stifling heat of summer and the biting cold of winter, they sat at the machines all day every day. The only time they took a few minutes to relax was during lunch, when the thin, distasteful soup that the factory provided in addition to our wages was served. Everything about them

repulsed me, but I was determined to stay there as long as I could and try to fit in with them to avoid their ignorant suspicions. At all costs, I resolved not to draw any undue attention to myself.

Chapter X

When I made that resolution, I had no idea how high the cost would be. As the weeks went by, I remained isolated from my fellow workers. I had no desire to become friends with any of them, but I recognized the necessity of fitting in, becoming at least superficially acceptable to them. But, as time passed, they stayed away, regarding me suspiciously and excluding me from their conversations. Since I had no idea what their real reason was, I anticipated the worst. I was doubly careful of my attitude and behavior, thinking that I might have betrayed myself and that they knew that I was Jewish. I also paid much attention to my work, thinking that they wouldn't be so suspicious when they saw that I had skills comparable to theirs.

It took a while longer before I found out what their criteria for acceptability was. Until the war, I had never known want or poverty. I had owned my own business and lived comfortably from its profits, working for myself. When the war came, my life had changed. I knew for the first time

what it meant to be poor, to be pressured by want. When need pressed me to work for Toebbens on Lesno Street in the ghetto, I still retained some of my independent ways. I never thought of taking anything that wasn't mine or that I hadn't earned. I saw my fellow workers there take things from the factory and make a sport of doing so. It was their only way, however small, of getting back at the hated Germans. They couldn't fight them or shoot them back, so they stole from them. Until now, I had been merely an onlooker in the sport, but I never thought of joining in.

Then one day on Plotzka Street, after I had been there a few weeks, I was looking among the buttons at work. I had a blouse that needed buttons, I wanted to fix it so that I wouldn't have to wash the same one out every night. Buttons were scarce and so was money, so I resorted to taking some from the shop. I found what I needed and took them home with me, thinking that no one but I would know.

Shortly after that, one of my fellow workers approached me, friendly for the first time. Then another woman struck up a conversation during the day. I was puzzled by the sudden change, but I returned her friendly banter. Finally, she told me the reason for the wariness of the others. They had been watching me all those days, she said. It was obvious that I was different from them because my Polish was perfect and my behavior more refined. More than that, they had observed

another major deviation in my behavior: I took nothing from the shop as they did. Because of this, they thought that I was a spy for the Toebbens. They concluded that I had been sent by Toebbens to watch them and to report their thefts to him. So they had watched me in return. Despite my caution, someone had seen me take the buttons. The news of my crime had spread and they knew that they had been wrong about me. I was not a spy for Toebbens, they concluded, since I took from him as they did. I was just a worker, poor as they were.

Since I had started to work at the Toebbens about the time Alice was admitted to the hospital, I arranged to take her to Dluga Street when she was released. The shop foreman, who watched me more closely than the others, once commented harshly on my lateness. I reminded him just as harshly that many others were late also. His answer was a veiled warning and threat. It was not so bad for the others to be late, he said, but it was bad for me. No more needed to be said: he suspected that I was Jewish. But for all his German dress and authority, I didn't let him frighten me. I let him know that I suspected that he was Jewish, too. I had no reason for knowing, but I was certain just the same. If he threatened me only, I was ready to tell him that I knew about him. So both of us watched each other and waited.

I trusted Janina and knew that she would be good to Alice if I left her. I knew that, if the Germans came looking in the building on Dluga Street, or if the Polish police saw the child

there all the time and decided to investigate her presence there, Janina might not be able to save Alice from them. I didn't want to put her in the position of having to save Alice's life by forfeiting her own.

Only a few days passed when I began to realize that it was a problem for Alice to live on Dluga Street. The location of the apartment wasn't good for her emotionally. She had seen much brutality and murder in the ghetto. She had heard screams and the sound of deadly gunfire in the night. She knew what it was like to be hunted and shot at. Now, so close to the wall of the ghetto on Dluga Street, those ghastly sights and sounds were nearby once more. She remembered that she had two narrow escapes when I wasn't with her. The shooting and screaming across the Platz Krasinski affected her deeply. A few times I had to go out alone, leaving Alice with Janina and telling her that I would return at a certain time. She was frightened, as she heard the police capturing Jews near the wall. When the shooting and screaming started, she became upset, thinking that maybe it was me screaming. Worst of all, each time I left alone, she thought I would be killed and never return. The horrible death of her grandmother and aunts was indelible in her mind. Even though we were out of the ghetto, she was afraid that I would meet the same end as the other members of her family had..

Seeing her distress increasing, I knew that some other location would be better for Alice. Alice was very mature for a child of ten because she had been through so much suffering, but she was still a child, my child. I wanted to insulate her as much as possible from the horror of the war.

She still needed the things a child of ten needs: attention from her mother and any bit of security that I could give her under the circumstances. I wanted her with me desperately, but I forced myself to consider her needs first. I tried to be objective and reasonable about the situation. Although we were better off than we had been in the ghetto, it was still very possible that I could be found out at work. If that happened, and the Germans killed me, I wanted Alice to be able to survive without me. I wanted her to be able to go on with her life, to be strong and to feel as secure as she could. I wanted her to have the self-discipline derived from a good education, too. My education had always been a joy to me, as well as a source of strength and satisfaction. I wanted the same for my child.

I heard about a convent school in Wawer, a suburb of Warsaw. It was Catholic, run by the Felician Sisters. Students boarded there and were educated there, under the constant and conscientious supervision of the nuns. I thought carefully about the religious aspect of my daughter's education. Under normal circumstances, I would have wanted Alice to follow the faith of her entire family. I didn't want her to lose her identity. But I had to face the reality that was staring me in the face: Alice might never have the opportunity to practice Judaism in her lifetime. I wanted her to have a faith, even though it might not be the faith that I and her family had had. I wanted that faith to mean something to her. I wanted

her faith to support her if something happened to me. She would always be Jewish because she was born Jewish. But, the convent school seemed the best alternative for the time being. I didn't consider it hypocritical for Alice to learn the tenets of Catholicism along with her other studies, nor did I consider it disloyal to my own faith. All that mattered to me was Alice's survival under the best possible circumstances. It seemed more rational to place her in the secure atmosphere of the convent among ethical people who would supervise her even if I perished than to keep her in the distressing environment of Dluga Street.

I began to prepare myself and Alice for her residence at Wawer. Ever since leaving the ghetto, I had made a point of learning as much about Catholicism and the Gentile traditions as I could. I had learned some of the Catholic prayers and the proper demeanor at Mass while I had lived at the Car's. I had also learned all the traditional ceremonies and special foods that were prepared at holidays among Catholics. I knew most of the important saint days and the ways that these special holidays were celebrated in Catholic homes. Now, our preparation became much deeper and more thorough. It was important for Alice to fit in completely with the Catholic children at the convent so that she would be safe. I didn't have to tell her that her life and mine might depend on concealing her identity. Together Alice and I reviewed all that we knew about Catholicism.

Mrs. Swerkowska, who was hiding my husband and brother, got me a catechism so that I could increase my knowledge and teach Alice more.

Early in the fall, I took Alice to Wawer and enrolled her in the convent school. Naturally, I used the name on my false papers, Zofia Woluszczuk. Alice had a certificate of baptism. Naturally, the sisters asked many questions about Alice's background. I told them that Alice's father was in the Polish army. Since he was away and couldn't support us, I said that I had to work and didn't want to leave Alice unsupervised during the day. I told them that I wanted my child to start her education, despite the chaos of the German occupation. They accepted Alice into the school. Being separated from her during the week would be painful for us both, but I was willing to trade my pain and hers for her emotional security in the long run. The anxiety of living near the ghetto walls would be eliminated for my daughter. Even though our time together would now be limited to Sundays, I knew that she would be safe at the convent. Most of all, I knew that if I should be caught by the Gestapo, there would be someone to take care of Alice.

Once Alice was settled and I was accepted by my fellow workers, it was easier to go to work each day. Soon it dawned on me that I might be able to ease my financial situation, which was always bordering on collapse because of all my expenses. My friend, Edmund Karlowicz, was still in the

leather business, but he was short of supplies and skilled employees. He offered me a job after my regular working hours at his house. There, I cut gloves and belts for Karlowicz and the wages he paid me helped with my financial burdens.

Soon after I began my part-time job, rabbit fur and other scarce materials began to come through Toebbens' shop. We made various articles for the German army, so we often had materials and furs, buttons and other things that were unobtainable to other factories. When the fur and other leather began coming into the shop, I told Karlowicz right away. He offered to buy anything I could get out of the shop, but cautioned me to make the best possible arrangements beforehand. He would rather do without the materials, he said, than see me get caught. Having seen the method used by the other workers to get stolen items out of the shop, I was confident that I would be able to make regular deliveries to him.

The routine for getting stolen materials out of the shop was really quite primitive and easy. The first step was learning from the others at the shop which of the German guards could be bribed. The price of the bribery was figured into the final price and considered as part of the overhead. Next came the selection of the stolen materials. Nothing that could be traced in any way was worth stealing. Only items that could be concealed on the body could be taken,

since the thief himself was the means of transporting the goods out of the shop. By watching my fellow employees, I learned how to get skins, fabric and other materials out of the shop. When closing time came, the workers gathered the items that they were taking that day. Then they padded their bodies with the skins and fabric, draping them over their shoulders and down their back putting them inside their shirts around their waists. Then, donning their coats, they stuffed the remainder of the goods up their sleeves. The most important step was to make sure that all items were secure without being held onto, so that the thief could walk naturally in the streets and have nothing hanging out or dropping. Once stuffed and covered by a coat, the workers left the shop, passing the bribed guards who searched everyone as they were leaving. Once past the cooperative and well-paid guard, the thief was free to peddle his wares anywhere he could. I soon joined my co-workers in taking whatever I could sell from Toebbens' shop. Padded like they were, I got past the bribed guards and went straight to Karlowicz's house. There I unburdened myself and he paid me for my goods. My extra job and my thievery were helping somewhat to ease my financial load.

Janina inadvertently helped give me an idea to make a few zlotys extra per week. One day, she gave me 50 cookies that she had bought to take to work with me. When I got them out later at the shop, I got an idea. My co-workers might like them too. I offered the few I had for sale and they

were quickly gone. In spite of the hard times and their near-destitution, the other workers in the shop were surprisingly free with their money. Since I was so careful of every penny of my money, I thought their easiness with money strange. But I chalked it up to the fact that, since they came by their money by stealing easily, they were willing to spend it just as easily. So, each day for some weeks Janina bought cookies at the bakery near the house on Dluga Street. As my profits increased, I reinvested it in a larger number of cookies each day. Soon, I had a daily concession in the shop. The business added a few zlotys a week to my small income. But suddenly one day, I was jerked back to the awful reality of having to remember my position in the shop and my resolution to fit in unobtrusively.

Seeing my cookie business becoming more successful each day, two of the other workers decided to give me some competition for the business. One day, the Haberlings, a mother and her daughter, also bought cookies to sell at the shop. I realized immediately that I was facing another choice. I could compete with them and risk their animosity if I was more successful than they. That animosity could escalate into retaliation at any time in the future. They might make it a point to find out the truth about me. They would no doubt report their findings to the police. As I saw it, it would be more prudent to keep my resolution to be inconspicuous. I decided that the few zlotys a week from the cookies weren't worth the

risk of possible discovery. I let the Haberlings take over the cookie concession at the shop.

One day all the workers in the shop were ordered downstairs, away from their regular jobs. They had a special assignment for the morning. A huge shipment of clothing had arrived from Poniatowa, a concentration camp in the East of Poland. Our assignment was to sort the clothing. Eager for a change from the pressing routine of the shop, the workers filed downstairs with the foreman.

No matter what the circumstances, I wouldn't go. I couldn't bring myself to handle and sort the clothing of my fellow countrymen, fellow Jews, my fellow human beings, who had been killed by the Nazis. I couldn't help the Germans to capitalize from the murder of others. It was degrading enough to have to manufacture clothing for the beasts.

The workers returned in the afternoon and so did the foreman, who asked me why I had not gone downstairs as ordered. I told him that I had other work to do. It was an impertinent remark, but it brought no reprisals. The others talked about what they had been doing. They laughed about the fact that some of the clothes were stained with blood. Then, one after another, they began to drift over to me. Each one got out something that they had managed to steal from the pockets of the dead ones. There were some small pieces of jewelry, a few trinkets. One after another, they asked me if I thought that their treasure was real gold.

I was panic-stricken. What did they know that they were asking me such questions? I asked them. All I got were sly smiles and replies that I should know whether their trinkets were made of real gold or not.

The days of hard work and the evenings of more work dragged on. My constant financial problems, the fatigue, the ever-present hunger, the lack of support from a family circle that was no more and the fear that I would be discovered all weighed me down like an enormous stone on my back. I felt as though I was on an ever-accelerating treadmill and I didn't know how much longer I could keep plodding onward. The only lightening of my burdens came each Sunday, when it was visiting day at the convent.

Each week, seeing Alice for a few hours was what kept me going through the long days. Sunday morning, I would get up early, gather the little things I had bought for Alice, dress and set out for the convent. It was a long walk to the suburbs, well over an hour. There was a train that went there, but I didn't dare take it. I was afraid that somehow I might be recognized or followed, since I went every week.

Every Sunday it was obvious that Alice anticipated my visit with the same feeling that I had. Week after week, as I approached the gate I could see her standing like a sentinel, watching and waiting. As we kissed and embraced and chattered together behind the walls that encircled the school, it was easy to imagine that there was no war, no Germans, for just a little while. Yet, ironically, if there were no Germans,

Alice and I would not be meeting in this place only once a week. Although the atmosphere of the convent was quiet and orderly, as Alice and I talked over the events of the week, the pain of our hiding and our deprivation was never far away.

The first thing that Alice always did was to eat some of the goodies that I had been able to gather for her to bring. After the first visit, I saw that, like everyone else in Poland, the children at the school were going hungry. Alice had been particularly affected by the lack of food because of the diet at the school. They made a soup at the convent out of beans that were normally fed to animals. In those lean times, the animals took second place to the children. For some reason, the soup gave Alice diarrhea. The first Sunday, I brought a huge sandwich for her, made with long French bread spread lavishly with butter and stacked with ham. I expected that she would eat part of it first and save the rest for later. Instead, she tore the package open and devoured the whole sandwich in minutes. Then I realized that she was very hungry and that the convent diet wasn't enough for her. There was little use in complaining though, because food was scarce all over. So each week, I brought some extra things to eat, hoping that Alice could add to her diet each day by having something extra. I didn't realize that having those extras and getting to eat them herself were not necessarily going to follow.

At first, it didn't dawn on me that the other children at the school were just as hungry and deprived as my daughter. Besides, many of them were orphans and had no one to bring them extra goodies on Sunday. So, they did the two next best things. They either begged Alice so pittifully for some of her things that she shared them, or they stole them from her. The Sisters gave Alice a small locked box to keep her things in, but many times even that proved no barrier to the others. Hunger made them very ingenious thieves. The problem of keeping the food continued the whole time she was at the convent, but I just kept bringing extra food each week.

Alice was always very anxious to share the event of her week with me. Because of her maturity, she knew that she must blend in with her comrades and their activities as naturally as possible. The preparation I had given her in the way of teaching her prayers and other Christian customs had been a start. But each week, something would always come up that demanded some bit knowledge that she didn't have. She became very quick at covering her tracks. She noticed that her schoolmates made the Sign of the Cross quickly and nonchalantly. Fearing that she would look different by not making it that way, she sought out the most private place she could think of to practice in front of a mirror. The most obvious place, to her, to acquire the art of making a casual Sign of the Cross, rather than a stilted, uneasy one, turned out to be the bathroom. Often, she told me, she would go into the bathroom and stand in front of the mirror, making the Sign of the Cross while watching

herself to see if she was facile enough about it.

Saying the Rosary and remembering the fifteen mysteries to be recited during it was her stumbling block. Recite with me as she may say, there were always a few spots where she got confused. One day, she told me, one of her classmates leaned over in church and asked her what mystery was to be recited next. Taken off balance, Alice couldn't respond with the correct answer, so she stayed silent. The child next to her asked again, but Alice didn't reply. Later, outside the chapel, the girl asked why Alice didn't tell her the correct answer. Not wanting to admit the truth, Alice was forced to think up an excuse. "What's the matter with you," she chastised the girl, "don't you know we're not supposed to talk in church?" I was pleased with my daughter's reply. It meant that she was learning to think fast by herself. She was beginning, in little ways, to be able to take care of herself.

I noticed, too, that I had figured correctly when I had decided to place my daughter at the convent for religious reasons, little by little, I could see that she was being absorbed into the faith that surrounded her. Although she was far from being completely happy at Wawer, my purpose in sending her there was being fulfilled. Slowly, she was learning Catholicism and being absorbed into its ways. Having a place to belong and routine and people around her who had strong beleifs was helping her in her upsetting situation.

More and more, she expressed the desire to really belong there, not to stay forever, but not to have to be apart from her schoolmates in the faith that she expressed. She was beginning to derive a measure of comfort from the religion that was practiced with such frequency and fervor around her. She was still worried about being discovered and she was still aware that she was different, dangerously different, but at least she seemed to indicate that she didn't feel immediately threatened all the time.

There was always one big fear for her to contend with, though. That was the fear for my safety. She knew from her own experience that I was not altogether safe where I was working or living. She was still afraid of the same thing that she had been afraid of on Dluga Street: that each time she saw me would be the last. That was the reason that she stood so determinedly by the gate each week. She was waiting there because she could see me coming. Each time as she watched for me, there was the fear that I would never come. That was why I never disappointed her. I never missed a Sunday because I understood her fear. I carried it with me myself.

As busy as I was, I managed to keep in constant contact with most of the people who had helped me get out of the ghetto. I communicated with Mrs. Swerkowska at least monthly, when I paid her the room and board for my husband and brother. Each time we spoke, I got a report about their conditions and gave a message from Alice and me. It was the closest thing we had to communication. It was impossible for me to visit Jacob

and my husband, because the risk was too great. Mrs. Swerkowska was risking her life for them, so I wouldn't have dreamed of asking her to visit. They were staying indoors constantly, she said. She didn't dare let them out of the house since one of the neighbors might see them, and ask questions or make a call to the police about their suspicions. They were being well fed, she assured me, since she was able to keep her job and bring in some money other than what I paid her for their borad. They were being cared for by her sister, Mrs. Rutkowska, who was home taking care of her child during the day. They had the run of the house, except that they had to keep away from windows and retire to a special crawl space in the cellar when the German patrols came around. Because she worked in the city, Mrs. Swerkowska was even able to bring them the daily newspapers, so that they knew what was going on in the world outside the house. I was comforted by the fact that they were safe as the situation would allow.

I was also still in contact with Zenon, who had been so kind to me for so long. One time after Alice went to Wawer, he asked me some questions about her whereabouts and about the location of my husband and brother. It pained me to have to keep him in the dark about my arrangements, because I was afraid that he would think that I distrusted him. Seeing that I was upset by his questions, he asked why I wouldn't tell him where my family was. I had to explain to him that I felt that

he had taken enough risks for us already. I told him that I thought it best that he remain ignorant of where Alice was and where Jacob and my husband were. That way, I explained to him, if something happened to me and he was questioned about me, he would not have to lie. That way, too, he would not have the burden of remembering one more thing that he must always conceal. Even in front of the questions from one of his own family, he wouldn't have to be on his guard about how much to tell about our locations. If something had happened to me during that time, I had arranged it so that no one could trace the rest of my family. Zenon didn't know the whereabouts of Alice, Jacob or my husband. Mrs. Swerkowska didn't know where I was living. Karlowicz didn't know where Alice was or where I lived.

Chapter XI

One Sunday morning, Janina Szymanska told me that some relatives of hers were coming for a short visit. She asked if there was someplace I could go while they were in the house. She explained that she didn't want them to meet me, or even to know that I was staying there. They might get suspicious and start asking unwelcome questions about me. She seemed not to trust these relatives of hers. I agreed that it would be wise for me to go out while her relatives visited. Such a circumstance always depressed me. It had happened before at some of the other places that I had stayed. Even though I knew that Janina was protecting me, having to go out so that visitors wouldn't see me always hurt. It made me feel less valuable, less human, less secure. It made me feel that I was something shameful, not worthy of being around others. I left Janina's feeling hurt and demeaned. Slowly I turned the corner and headed down Miodova Street, going deeper into the Stare Miasto, the oldest section of Warsaw.

At the next corner, I turned to go down Senatorska Street, but I halted when I looked up at a balcony near the corner. From the four corners of the balcony dangled the bodies of four priests. There was no sign posted giving the reason for their martyrdom. The habited bodies simply hung there by the necks, swaying every so often. I turned away quickly, revolted, shocked, and more depressed.

I walked further down Miodova Street toward the section where there were many old churches. I headed toward the Cathedral on Shiet Yanska Street, where a large crowd was gathering for Sunday Mass. I stepped inside the large church and stood with the worshippers at the back. The priest was standing in the pulpit preaching the sermon. I listened, hoping to hear something to lift my depression. The priest was talking about the Jews. He was saying that it was a good thing that the Germans were doing, ridding Poland of these pests.

I looked around at the people standing alongside me. Their faces remained uplifted and placid. It was obvious that they agreed with what was being said. None of them betrayed in their faces the anger that was bubbling inside of me. I was shocked at the hyprocisy of a so-called man of God who publicly condoned the Nazi's murders, let alone encourage his followers to do likewise. I looked around for the nearest exit. Slowly, trying to remain inconspicuous, I slipped through the crowd and left the church.

Across the street was the Church of St. Ann, humble in comparison with the cathedral. I went inside. There were few

lights and no people. Drained by the indicents of my outing, I walked to the front and knelt down before the statue of the Madonna. My inner voice screamed at God. Where could I go to be safe? When would all this end? What would happen to me before it did? Who would come to get rid of the Nazis? How much longer could I go on?

I don't remember how long I stayed there in the silence or whether I cried or prayed. I only remember the long, lonely walk home to Dluga Street. Janina's relatives had left when I got back.

Chapter XII

All through the long, cold winter of 1943, I continued my Sunday visits to Alice at the convent. Except for the lack of food, which was universal in those times, I was content with the conditions there. As the weeks passed, I noticed Alice drawing more and more comfort from the faith she practiced at the school. Rather than alarm me, this gave me great peace of mind. If anything should happen to me, I thought, the Catholic faith would provide my child with a safe place to belong and a source of spiritual and emotional strength. My daughter seemed happy about her faith, except for one thing.

Early in the spring of 1944, the nuns began to prepare the children in Alice's class for their First Holy Communion. The ceremony, which was to be held in early June, is a big event in the life of every Catholic child. It is the first time that they receive the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ, at Mass. The children are carefully prepared for

months before the ceremony, so that they will be aware of its significance. They are bought new clothes, the girls white dresses and the boys dark suits. After the ceremony, they are given gifts. In a normal family, a special dinner is prepared or there is a family party to celebrate the occasion. At the convent school, the nuns planned a dinner for the children ad invited any of their families who could come. As the time of the ceremony drew near, Alice began to attach more and more importance to it.

Finally, one Sunday she told me that she didn't know what to do about the celebration. That part of her who had lived through the horrors of the ghetto recognized the importance of not being found out. That part of her who had been tought not to lie to those whom she trusted recognized the importance of being true to oneself. That part of her who was just a child recognized the need to belong and be accepted somewhere. From her conversation, I could see that those three parts seemed to be at war inside her. It was important to her that she not go to the ceremony as an imposter. The strain of living a lie, pretending to be what she was not, wasn't for her any longer, she said. Either she go to the ceremony as a Catholic or she wanted to leave the convent before June.

Despite my conviction that Alice was Jewish because she had been born Jewish and that she would always be Jewish, I understood her feelings. It was a great strain on me, an adult, to live behind the identity of someone else, so I knew

that it might be a greater strain on my child. I knew my daughter well enough to know that she had a strong character and great sensitivity. I was proud of her insistance on maintaining her integrity, in spire of all that she had endured. I felt that she had the right to choose what gave her themost security in the threatening world around her. I regretted that circumstances had not permitted me to give her a traditional Jewish religious foundation. But I had long since learned not to regret events in the past that I could not control. The deaths of my mother and sisters had taught me not to look back and punish myself. I had taught to face reality as it was, whether I liked it or not, and to look always to the future when I made decisions. The way things looked for Poland, there might never come a time when Alice could practice Judaism peacefully and openly. Since Alice's security and peace of mind were my first concerns, I agreed see about her baptism.

My friend Mrs. Swerkowska helped me straighten things out for Alice. At Easter time, she consulted with her parish priest, who said that he would baptize Alice quietly. She arranged the date and informed me about the ceremony. Alice was baptized that spring, with Anna Swerkowska as her godmother. About a week later, she was confirmed by the bishop in the little church in Anin, according to the Europan tradition. Naturally, the nuns at the school never knew about either ceremony. When she returned to the convent after the confirmation, my daughter was no longer an imposter.

I felt happy for her on those days when she experienced the security of belonging. I could see that it gave her some joy to be part of something beautiful and acceptable. On the day of her baptism, she urged me to do as she had done. That made me happy too, to think that she wanted to me to share her happiness. But another remark she made that day made me realize that what my child had endured at the hands of the Germans would never be erased from her mind. Coming out of the church after the ceremony, she turned to me and remarked joyfully that, since she was free from any sin, she would go straight to heaven if she should die soon. It was obvious that the possibility of death was very much on her mind. It was real to her, just as it was to me.

As June, 1944 approached, the children prepared for their big day and so did I. I was determined that, despite my limited finances, Alice would have what all the other children had on her First Communion Day. Her clothes would be new, and all white from the skin out. I found some beautiful white fabric which a dressmaker transformed into a lovely dress. I bought Alice new underwear, shoes and a petticoat. Anna Swerkowska also made a beautiful contribution. She had a wreath of hyacinths made for Alice to wear on her head.

Due to the nuns' extensive preparations with the children, the ceremony was flawless. Meeting Alice outside the chapel afterwards, I was content. She looked so beautiful and secure that it was hard to believe that only the year before she and

I had barely escaped the Gestapo at the Car's. Alice was anxious to have me attend the dinner that the nuns had prepared. But I was reluctant to stay, as I was afraid that I might possibly be recognized by some of the parents who might be there. I was afraid that I might make some small slip in my behavior that might draw suspicious looks at me, and worse, Alice. I explained myself tearfully to the child, but I encouraged her to go to the dinner and to eat well. Promising to see her the next Sunday, I left early.

During the summer of 1944, Alice stayed at the convent and I continued to work at Toebbens. One Sunday, during our visit, my daughter told me that one of the nuns had been asking her questions about herself and me. She had asked Alice where we were both born, and where I attended church. In her clever way, Alice had answered the questions quickly and well, but we both knew what they might mean for us. I was alarmed.

During July, there was an announcement that we would all get a vacation. The shops in Warsaw would be empty of workers for two weeks. Actually that announement was meant to conceal the truth. For weeks, there had been rumors that the Russians were advancing toward Warsaw. The Polish people lived from day to day, not certain that the rumors were any more than that. We all held our breaths and lived on hope. The "vacation" was the first inkling I had that the rumors might be true.

The vacation was just an excuse to eliminate onlookers the stripping of the factory. During July, the Germans iniated the prelude to their retreat. They closed the shops and began to ship out all the equipment and materials possible in preparation for the inevitable Russian advance. They intended to leave nothing of use for the Russians to conquer.

It was during the beginning of our enforced vacation that my financial problems began to depress me again. As long as I had worked, although I had to struggle, it was possible for me to provide for my family. Now, with no income from my job or from Karlowicz, I was desperate. I was worried constantly about being able to pay Alice's tuition at the school. If there were already suspicions at the convent about Alice and me, my inability to pay would only cause them to surface.

One day, at my lowest point, I was walking on the street when I met an old friend, Maximilian Lindner. He had once been an accountant for Alexander Weigle and now owned his own business. Anxious to hear about me and my family, he invited me to his office, where we could talk privately. I told him sadly about my family who had perished, who had survived and who was missing. Naturally, I told him no details concerning the whereabouts of the survivors. I trusted him completely, but I saw no reason to burden him with too much truth.

The subject came around to my financial state. My depressed attitude must have told more than the facts I had provided about the sources of my income. I had been working night and day for many months, and I must have looked it. When I recounted the impact that the closing of the shop had on me, I coùld not prevent the desperation from invading my voice.

Lindner interrputed my monologue with a question. "How much money would it take for you to be able to rest for a month," he asked.

"About 15,000 zlotys," I replied.

He rose from his chair and went to a large safe nearby, opened it and took out a stack of bills, bound by a bank tape and marked 15,000 zlotys. He handed it to me.

I began to cry, at first quietly, then without restraint. I shook my head silently at the money and refused. I couldn't take it. To me it would mean damaged pride, dependence, and defeat.

But he insisted. "Take it," he said. "I know that, if I were in your place, you would do the same for me. Do you know how many times your father helped me and others? Maybe someday I'll need help from you too."

A few minutes later, I was on my way to Karlowicz with the money. I wanted to send the money to Anna Swerkowska so that my unemployment wouldn't affect my family's safety. After delivering the money, I hurried home to Dluga Street and my evening meal of dry bread adn cold water.

I never cooked anything at the Szymanska's in the evening, not even a cup of tea. The cost of gas was terrible and I didn't want to impose on them.

It was August 1, 1944 when I went to the convent at Wawer to get Alice. The German retreat was obvious and whatever happened, I wanted Alice with me. When I arrived Alice wasn't the only one waiting for me at the gate. One of the nuns was there, too. She was anxious to speak to me.

She came right to the point. She asked where Alice's father was. I had told the nuns a story before, but I saw no point in reiterating it. I made up another one.

Alice had no father, I said. She was illegitimate. The nun stared in shock. Then, recovering, she said that there was a special school for children like Alice, I pretended anger. Alice was innocent, I declared. I saw no reason why she should suffer or be penalized for something that had happened to me.

The nun was adamant: Alice would have to go elsewhere. I was just as adamant. It didn't matter, I said. I had come that day intending to take Alice out of the school.

Thus, Alice and I made our exit from the convent school. I felt badly about having to take my daughter out of a place that had provided her with what I wanted her to have. I felt sad that I was taking her from a place that we both perceive as safe to a future that was completely uncertain for us both. The German retreat had begun and so had the Russian advance. All of Poland hoped that things would get better, but no one knew what would happen before better times came.

I was in such a hurry to leave the school with Alice that I didn't go to her room to pack her few things. All I wanted was to get back to Dluga Street safely with my daughter near me.

On the way home from the school, I stopped by Karlowicz's shop. The moment he saw us, he was alarmed.

"What are you doing here," he exclaimed. I answered that we were on our way back to Dluga Street together to await the result of the German retreat.

Then he explained the reason for his concern. He had a son and daughter in the underground. They had told him that the long-awaited Uprising against the Germans would begin that afternoon. Plans were set that it would begin in the Stare Miasto, a section of Warsaw that included Dluga Street. I couldn't go back there, he said. It was too dangerous.

Then he took out a set of keys. They were the keys to Anna Swerkowska's city apartment, he explained. I was to take them and go to the building on Zorawia Street and stay there. It would be safer than going to Dluga Street. He handed me a huge loaf of French bread he had in the shop. The apartment probably wouldn't be well stocked, he said, because Anna didn't use the place often anymore. Also, I wouldn't have time to stop anywhere for food, he said.

I took Alice and went directly to Zorawia Street.

Chapter XIII

As Karlowicz had predicted, there were scanty provisions at the apartment, just a sack of sugar and a large piece of yellowed bacon. I gave Alice something to eat and had some bread and sugar with her. I noticed that there was a young woman about my age coming and going in the building. She had a son about the same age as Alice. She seemed respectable enough, but I didn't approach her right away. I had had many lessons in not getting friendly with strangers.

In the late afternoon the Uprising began. From the building on Zorawia, I could hear the shooting and bombing going on in Stare Miasto, close to Dluga Street. As the bombing got worse and came closer, I began to think of the Szymanskas. I wondered what was happening to them and whether the fighting was close to the house on Dluga Street. Alice and I stayed in the apartment quite a while, despite the furor of the gunfire all around us. We watched the fighting out the window until the bombs got too near. They flashed

across the night sky like explosions of lightning and the closer they came, the more frightened we were. Finally, we realized that we mustgotothe shelter in the building. It was too dangerous to try to stay in the apartment. As Alice and I ran across the courtyard, I realized that I didn't feel the same way now as I had felt when we had to go to the shelter in 1939. Then I had been enveloped by a depressed foreboding. Now, despite my fear, I felt an exhilaration. Like all the Polish who had heard the rumors of the Uprising long before it exploded that August evening, I was filled with the hope that it would succeed. Like them, I had witnessed the beginnings of the German retreat and had greeted the Russian advance with impatient interest. I hoped now that between the Uprising and the advance of the Russians, Poland would be rid of the German monsters before long. Like all the other Polish, I should have known better. We should have taken our lesson from the way the Germans handled the ghetto Uprising in the spring of 1943.

The mood of the shelters, where Alice and I took refuge, reflected our own feelings. As in 1939, there was confusion, screaming, praying, crying. But unlike before, there was also hope. There was the feeling that when we came out of the shelters this time that it would not be as prisoners, but as our own liberators. As in 1939, there were few provisions or sanitary facilities, but none of us were as affected by it as we had been before. We were all hungry, tired, dirty and afraid, but fewer of us were desperate.

Early during our stay in the shelter, I met a priest, about my own age and his middle aged aunt. They lived in the building and had been driven to the same shelter as we had. We struck up a conversation, a cautious one on my part, while the rockets and bombs of the uprising flashed and burned in the night. I told them Alice and I were staying temporarily in the apartment across the courtyard.

Late that night, the bombs stopped and things grew quiet. Cautiously, people began to leave the shelter and return to their homes, if only for the night. Alice and I were preparing to go when the priest and his aunt approached us. In case we all had to return to the shelter, it was dangerous for my daughter and me to cross the courtyard.

Their apartment was situated right above the shelter, and they invited us to stay with them until things got better. I was touched by the generosity of these two strangers. Gathering what few things I had been able to take to the shelter, Alice and I left with the priest and his aunt.

I don't remember exactly how many days we stayed with them, off and on. For most of the period of the Uprising, we shuttled back and forth from their apartment, to the shelter and back, with an occasional venture or two back to Mrs. Swerkowska's apartment for some things I had left there. What I do remember was the unfailing kindness of the priest and his aunt, whose names are lost to me now.

Their apartment was one large room where all four of us cooked, ate and slept. One thing I do remember well, is that each night we were there, after he had finished his saying his prayers for the day, the priest came to the side of the bed that Alice and I shared. Gently and carefully, he bent over and covered us, then went to bed himself. The priest was handsome and young and treated Alice like a father would.

During our trips to the shelter, I also got acquainted with the young woman I had seen when I first came to the building. Alice and her boy talked together while the two of us sat nearby, waiting, like all the rest of Warsaw, for the Uprising to end. Like me, she seemed to have no husband in sight, although neither of us asked the other any questions. I was careful, as always, not to talk about myself and to reveal nothing about my background to anyone. Even in the shelters, one could not feel completely safe.

The heat of August gave way to the coolness of September and still the Uprising continued. There was combat between the Polish and German forces all over the city. Like a poor dying horse that has been beaten too often, Warsaw was being lashed once more with bullets and bombs. In most of the city, there was no water, no gas, no electrcity. Some of the sewers were destroyed. Many of the streets were completely impassable because of the fallen buildings. The bodies of the dead, human and animal, were scattered among the ruins like so many broken toys. All work and most production in the city came to a

standstill, so it was almost impossible to get food or any other necessities.

Finally on October 2, 1943, our hopes fell apart. The Uprising was crushed by the German forces in the city. We came out of the shelters and waited for the German reprisals sure to come. We didn't have a long wait. On October 5, notices were posted concerning the evacuation of the city. The Germans wanted everyone out of Warsaw, so they announced that trains would be assigned to "relocate all of us to another part of Poland." As the punishment from the Uprising and in order to leave nothing for the advancing Russians, the city of Warsaw was to be burned. Land mines were planted all over certain areas of the streets, so those departing on the trains were assigned specific routes to the station. The people would be given some bread before they boarded the trains taking them to the country.

According to the departure schedule, Alice and I would leave by the train the next day. The young woman I had met was scheduled to leave on the same train. In discussing the plans made by the Germans, we struck up a bargain. We decided that we would try to travel together as much as possible, so that we could help one another. Since neither of us had any idea what was going to happen or where our relocation would deposit us, we hoped that once we were situated, wherever that might be, that one of us could find work while the other stayed home to care for the children. That way, we thought, we would all be able to survive.

The young woman and I boarded the trains with our loaves of bread on October 6. Once aboard the train, I began to think about the pattern of what was going on. I remembered well what the Germans had done with all the people I had known who were no longer of any use to them. I came to the conclusion that we were not going to be relocated to the country, but were being sent to the camps. As the trains headed south, in the direction of Treblinka, I became convinced that, unless we managed to escape the next time the train stopped somewhere, we were headed for death.

After a short while, the train halted and we were all ordered out. We were in the small town named Rembertow, south of Warsaw. Once out of the trains, we were herded into what had been a large hangar where planes were repaired. We stayed there for a while, then were ordered to move outside, where we would be transferred to another train waiting nearby. I signaled to my companion that this was the moment. As the crowd of people shuffled down the street outside the hangar, I told her that we had to get away now. She was afraid. Armed Gestapo escorted the mobs of people through the streets.

"If we try to run away, they will shoot us," my friend said.

"Then, they will have to shoot us," I said. "But I would rather die here like that than suffer and die in the camps."

My reply must have shocked my companion into going along with my plan. We began to straggle onto the fringe of the crowd, as they came out of the station. As the Germans steered the line of people around one side of the building, we turned and went around the other side. As I walked along with Alice by the hand, I waited for the shouts and the gunfire behind us. At the same time, I prayed that it would never come. Around the corner of the station, we watched the column of people being led away from us. Across the street from the station was a row of shops, near enough to run to, if we were lucky. Waiting our chance, the four of us made a dash for the nearest one, a pharmacy. The owner stared in amazement as we burst in his door. Obviously, he knew what was going on, because he told us that it had been a bad day. No one else had been able to escape from the crowds and get away. No one but us had managed to avoid the death trip.

We asked if he had a place for us to hide, at least for a while. Quietly, as if he had done this before, he led us down the stairs to the cellar. We could stay there, he said, if we were absolutely quiet. As soon as it was dark, he would return and let us out. Then we would have to leave.

Sitting there in the cellar with the children, my friend and I whispered plans about what we were going to do. She said that she had relatives in a small town nearby, Podkowa Lesna. When it got dark, we should try to get there as soon as we could and hope that they were still alive to help us.

A little after dark, the druggist came to set us free. He told us that there was a place nearby that had been set up as a reception center for the escapees from Warsaw and advised us to go there. We would be safe and would get food and shelter for the night. Following his directions, we walked through the deserted streets.

At the reception center, we found that there were many other refugees like ourselves, without any food or shelter. There were people all over the large room, talking and eating. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the quantities of food being served. It was simple and not very nourishing fare, potatoes and raw onions served together, but there was plenty for everyone. After our long weeks in the shelters and the fast since eating the last of the bread we were given aboard the train that morning, those potatoes and onions looked like steak and caviar to us. In the confusion of the center, it was comforting for me to have my friend nearby. For the first time in many months, I had someone to share some of my experiences with. Someone about my own age was going through what I was going through. Although we didn't know each other

very well, we had shared the danger of our escape from the transport. I dared not tell her anything about myself and my past experiences and she spoke little of her past, but we had in common a bond. Both of us had a child to care for and we had agreed to help each other share that responsibility. Together we had made a plan for survival. We would be of use to each other. It had been many months since I had any companionship, with anyone my own age. I began to feel that there was some thing better coming for all of us, if we could only hold on just a little while longer. But I had learned the lesson of caution well. I still was very careful of my behavior, so that no one would suspect that Alice and I were Jewish. I still used the name Zofia Woloszczuk. Even in the crowded reception center at Rembertow, where we all spent the night sleeping on tables, I found myself hoping that I wouldn't meet anyone who had known me in the Warsaw ghetto. I was still afraid of being found out.

The next morning, the four of us left Rembertow aboard the free train that was running between there and Podkowa Lesna. It was only a short ride, but the further away from Rembertow we rode, the more my spirits lifted. Warsaw and our fortunate escape from the transports seemed far away. When we arrived in the small town of Podkowa Lesna, my companion decided that she would try to find her family right away. I stayed near the station with the two children while she made her way to her relatives' house, neither of us knowing what she would find there.

It wasn't long before she arrived back at the station pulling a wagon. She had found her family, the Mancheskas, she said and they would be glad to make room for us and help us whatever way they could. Both of us agreed that our plan to stay together had been the wisest and happiest one for us under the circumstances. We loaded the children into the wagon and took turns pulling it through the streets of the town. We must have been a strange sight, two bedraggled, tired, dirty poorly dressed women, pulling a wagon with two children in the same condition as we. But there were many strange sights in Poland during those times and no one turned to stare at us as we moved through the streets.

From the moment that we arrived at the Mancheska house on Bobrowa Street, I began to feel safe and free. Perhaps that feeling had to do with meeting Janina Mancheska herself, my friend's aunt. Janina was a tall brunette, radiating generosity and competence. She had the manner of one who can cope with any situation with resourcefulness and calm. She and her husband and two sons lived in a big house in the small town of Podkowa Lesna where, I found out quickly, they housed many other refugees besides us. As she settled the four of us in our room, we met the others to whom she and her husband had given shelter in the evacuation. Besides her two sons and the four of us, four other people were sharing the room with us. Among them was Leonard Wiebicki, a minor Communist politician. I was introduced to him and to the Mancheskas as Zofia Woluszczuk and told no one anything

about my past, except that I like their niece, had been forced out of Warsaw with thousands of others.

As crowded as conditions were at the Mancheska's, things seemed heavenly to Alice and me. After the weeks in the shelters and being uprooted from the city aboard the crowded transports, it was grand to be able to wash ourselves and our clothes on a regular basis. Although we had only what we were wearing when we left Warsaw, I could wash out my underwear and blouse and Alice's things each night. We could bathe regularly and wash our hair. Until I went through periods when I was deprived of these simple luxuries, I never realized what they meant to my morale. Not to be able to bathe and have clean clothes was depressing.

The attitude of the Mancheskas also helped Alice and me to feel freer and more comfortable. They accepted us at face value: as people who were in need of their help. All during our stay at their home, I never felt that I had to be overly cautious. I never said anything about myself or my family, or told about any of my wartime experiences as others did. But now it wasn't so much out fear of being reported, it was just necessary. It was beside the point of our being there. I lived freely at the Mancheska's, without the feeling that I was being watched. I began to feel like a human being for the first time since the war began.

Although Mr. Mancheska had a good job as the director of a match factory nearby, I never did figure out how Janina fed all of us. None of us who were refugees from Warsaw had any money to speak of by the time we reached Podkowa Lesna. But, after working in the kitchen all day, Janina always managed to some with something nourishing for supper, to be sure, we all ate plenty of soup that winter of 1944. But for Alice and me, it was much better than what we had been living on in Warsaw, especially during the Uprising.

As always, I was looking for some way to become independent soon after my arrival in the small town. One day at the small market, I noticed that there were skins for sale there, mostly rabbit. Since I had worked with skins before, I thought that, if I had someone to show me how to make slippers, I might buy some skins and try to get some business going for myself. I found a shoemaker in the town who had some forms for shoemaking. He taught me how to use them and loaned them to me so that I could get started. I began to make gloves, which I had learned to cut and sew when I worked for Karlowicz. Then, once I had the shoe forms, I began to make fur-lined slippers. I worked steadily in my room at Janina's and soon was selling what I made in the market.

As Christmas approached, I felt more and more confident and free. Being able to have a little money of my own to give to Janina toward our room and board gave me some of my

old independence back. Alice and I were looking forward to the holidays with elation.

That year, Christmas filled our every expectation. Janina cooked and baked as much as the wartime shortages would allow. I was busy with my own preparations also. From my small supply of skins, I made each of the Mancheskas a gift of slippers and gloves. On Christmas Eve, Mr. Mancheska dressed as Santa Claus and visited the children. When they had all been given their gifts, he passed out a gift to each of the "guests". No one was left out. Somehow, these generous people managed to feed and shelter us all, besides giving each of us some small gift. I felt so comfortable that year, as I had not for so many before.

All through January and February of 1944, it was clear that the Germans were leaving and that the Russians were not far away. There were fewer and fewer Germans to be seen. As I watched them go, I determined that I would leave Podkowa Lesna before the Russians came. I didn't fear them as I did the Germans, but I regarded them with uncertainity. I knew that when the Russians did come, there would be a certain amount of chaos as they established themselves in the area. I didn't want to get caught up in that because I didn't know what the consequences of it would be for Alice and me.

Janina and her husband were much opposed to our leaving. They thought that it was still too dangerous for me to go. But my mind was made up. I hadn't heard any news of my husband and my brother for months, so I would have to go looking for them in Anin. To get there, I would have to go through Warsaw. Janina tried to disuade me. She asked me to stay a while, until the political situation was settled so that she and I could go into business together. But I said no. I was grateful to her for what she had done for us, but I wanted my independence, no matter what the cost. I had to find out what had happened to the remainder of my family.

One morning toward the end of February, 1944, Alice and I set out for Warsaw. Heading north on the main road, we began to see many truckloads of Russians on their way south. Several times they offered us rides, but I was going in the direction opposite from them, so I refused. Night came before we reached the city. I was afraid to go any farther. Walking through Warsaw at night with Alice wouldn't be too safe. So I stopped at a deserted inn along the road. There were many other refugees there, trying to make their way to different places. Since I had left the Mancheskas with only a little money, a container of sugar, some pieces of shoe leather and some bread, that night our supper was a meager one. In the morning we started for the city.

The closer we came, the more horrible the sights became. All along the roads were bodies of German soldiers, left as

they had fallen. They were sprawled everywhere along with the corpses of horses and other animals. There was such chaos in the city that no one was yet responsible for burying the dead. As Alice and I began to walk through the streets of the heart of the city, the scenery got worse. The building, so sturdy-looking in the past, now looked like pathetic skeletons. The light of the day streamed through the holes in the walls that were still standing. In between were huge piles of rubble that had once been houses and shops. The streets were barely passable because they were so obstructed by the broken stones and bricks and bits of concrete. There was broken glass everywhere. Some of the places we passed were still burning with no one to stop the fires. The remains of looters were scattered throughout the ruins of the buildings. Pieces of clothing and furniture that had been dragged out into the streets were simply left there. Most things were lying on the ground, tattered and broken. As it got later, and we walked on through block after block of ruins, more and more people began to walk among the rubble of the city. Everyone bustled along, but on no stopped to talk or look around. There was little noise. People just walked on toward their destinations, as did Alice and I. There were no soldiers around, except the dead Germans.

Heading northwest, I walked in the direction of the bridge that crossed the Vistula and led to Praga. Before the war, and a few times since, I had walked to Anin that way.

It never occurred to me that the familiar route would be interrupted. I was so tired and hungry that my steps were automatic and most of the scenery went unnoticed. On the familiar route leading to the bridge, just trudging forward unconsciously, I was suddenly halted by a scream from Alice and one from myself. Assuming that the bridge was where it had always been, I had forgotten to look before I stepped onto it. I had almost stepped into the precipice where the bridge had been and was no more. It had been destroyed by the Germans in an effort to prevent the Russians from entering the city from the northeast end.

Epilogue

Over the years many people have asked how I managed to survive the ghetto and the post-war years in Soviet-dominated Poland. At first, I used to reply that I didn't know. But they kept asking. The question kept coming up until I concluded that I must find an answer. I needed to search within myself until I defined those elements, both internal and external, that helped me to survive while so many others perished.

Now, from the perspective of my age I perceive that my survival didn't depend wholly on any one factor. I know now that it was a combination of elements, both internal and external, that singled me out for survival. My life was never completely in my own hands, nor did it depend entirely on others or on blind chance. Always, it was a combination of my actions, the actions of others and certain uncontrollable events that determined my survival.

I must designate the first external factor in my survival as the Supreme Being. Although I have never been devout, I know that there is a Higher Force, outside myself, that had a direct hand in my life. I see that that Being inspired me at many points to make certain crucial decisions. I know that that force provided me with special opportunities that others didn't have. I realize that that Person blessed me with relationships that developed into life-saving aliances. That being, for His own reasons, singled me out to suffer, to survive and to learn.

I am grateful for His choice, although I don't understand it. I accept my confusion and puzzlement over it. I saw many who were intelligent, courageous, more resourceful, more religious and more conscientious than I meet their deaths. I have asked "Why me?" a million times. Always I come to the same answer: partly because it was His choice that it be so. I don't know all the reasons for that choice, but I know that there are reasons.

A second external element in my survival is my background. Nothing of the material things that my parents left for their children has survived the holocaust. Our homes and property, our business, our money, is gone. Those tangible things, as it turned out, were of relatively little value because they were so easily taken away. It is the intangible heritage that my parents bequeathed to me that was a real treasure. It was those elements, that by example and training, my parents instilled in me that were the core of my survival. For instance, my education was of great value. I have always been grateful for the fact that my father educated us all equally, boys and girls alike. As a girl, I learned French and Latin in school. My father also hired a tutor to teach us Russian and German at home because, as he saw it, those countries were Poland's neighbors and we ought to know their language and their ways.

My father's attitude of open-mindedness and tolerance, which he instilled in us, was also a source of help. If I had not been encouraged, from my earliest days to cultivate friends regardless of religion and economic standing, I would have been lost. Because I had Gentile friends as well as Jewish friends,

I was able to get help when I needed it. Those whose friendships had only included Jewish individuals had no one to turn to when things became hopeless. Their friends were all in the same, or worse, conditions than they. I am grateful that my father taught me to value people for their character, rather than for their religion. I only hope that I have not overlooked any opportunity to reciprocate the aid that my friends gave.

I am also grateful to my parents for the fact that, even as a child, they respected my capacity to make decisions. In most instances, they encouraged me to think for myself, to have definite goals, to be as self-sufficient as possible. That encouragement gave me self-confidence and self-respect when the Nazis told the world that, as a Jew, I was worth nothing. That belief enabled me to keep trying even though the end seemed far away.

It would be foolish of me to say that my family's wealth wasn't a blessing at all. There were many times that, when I saw the rural peasants who became the ghetto beggars, I realized that I had a better chance of survival than they. There were many times that money to pay for smuggled food and medicines, cash to pay bribes, eased our situation. But, in the end, as the crazy man in the ghetto used to proclaim, "All are equal." Suffering, loss and death levelled us all. There came a time when money was no resource. There came many moments when only human kindness and morality separated me from death.

That brings to the fore the most important factor in my survival: my friends, those people who risked their lives to hide and rescue me. Alexander Weigle, Edmund Karlowicz, Zenon Schonfeld, Mrs. Schmidt, the Cars, the Florians, Janina Szymanska, the Mancheskis, Anna Swerkowska, all had one characteristic in common. They all possessed the same level of integrity. They all had the level of morality and ethics that transcends religion and social class. They were all examples of the highest level of human life. In the end, they were the instruments used by the Supreme Being to give me the gift of life. If there is any one factor in my survival that is most important, it is the quality of my friends.

Part of coming to terms with the experiences that I have had has involved defining what I have learned from them all. Along with the other survivors, some of whom suffered much more than I, I know what it means to persevere most extreme circumstances. Those of us who lived learned definite lessons about how to behave in crisis. We all possess many of the same attitudes toward life now that the crisis has passed. Staring at death, we have been forced to sort out our priorities. One lesson we have learned well: in times of crisis it is futile to try to maintain the illusion of normalcy. To try to go about the normal chores of everyday living is to live in a childish dream. In the face of disaster, only those who can admit the reality, accept the fact that change is imminent and throw away their normal behavior will live. Those who try to go

about their lives pretending that the danger is over, or will pass, or who believe that someone will appear to rescue them by some miracle while they simply wait, will die.

Those of us who survived know one thing about life: it is a struggle every step of the way. Survival is meant only for those who must try, who must keep going, who must help themselves. As survivors we know that, when we struggle to help ourselves, God sends others to help us, too.

There are times now when I wonder how those of us who survived got to be strong. Where did our strength come from? The best answer I have come across was "Measure your strength by your goals, not your goals according to your strength." It is impossible to anticipate how much strength lies dormant within until the moment comes to call it forth.